

The Workers' Advocate

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The CPUSA and the unemployed movement of the 1930's

At the Third Congress of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA in Fall 1988, a speech was given on the CPUSA's work in the unemployed movement of the 1930's. While the great depression was bringing ruin and starvation millions of workers, it was the communists who stood up for the unemployed. The accomplishments of this work, and the difficulties it encountered, are of lasting interest. But the CPUSA's change in line in the mid-30's, which was in accord with the corrupt views of the Seventh Congress of the CI of 1935, led to the destruction of this work. From a party which carried out the most consistently revolutionary work of any working class party in U.S. history, the CPUSA was step by step transformed into what it is today—a lapdog of the bourgeois liberals and a betrayer of Marxist communism. Its abandonment of communism is why it is necessary to build up a new Marxist-Leninist party today.

The following article is based on the speech and a far longer report which it summarized, and it expresses the viewpoint of the comrades who carried out the study.

Comrades,

In the not too distant future we are likely to see another period of economic crisis and high unemployment. And it is likely that the next crisis will be far deeper and far more severe than the crises of the 1980's. Due to the Reaganite cutbacks in social programs and unemployment insurance, next time around, the situation of the unemployed will be far more desperate than in the recent past. Already, due to restrictions on eligibility enacted in the past decade, less than 32 per cent of the unemployed are eligible for any unemployment insurance. This compares with over 75 per cent as late as 1978. Thus the question of unemployment and the struggle of the unemployed are likely to assume much greater significance.

In order to provide some historical background on the question of tactics with regard to the unemployed movement, the Central Committee has assigned my branch to look into the history of CPUSA's work among the unemployed in the 1930's.

But first, to grasp the work in the 30's, it is necessary to have some understanding of the 1920's.

The 1920's and the 1980's

The 1920's were a period much like the 1980's. It was a decade of intense capitalist offensive, rationalization of industry, and relatively high unemployment among industrial workers.

The unemployment rate among industrial workers was 10 percent or better. The number of employed industrial workers decreased during the decade by about 200,000, while production increased about 40 per cent. Considering the natural growth of the working class population, this rationalization drive meant a large increase in mass unemployment. Rationalization was brutal and intense in every industry from the then new auto and electrical industries to the old mining and textile industries. But

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Boston transit workers squeezed to pay the banks

The following articles are taken from the Feb. 1 issue of *Boston Worker*, voice of the MLP-Boston. This issue also contained the article "On the Green Line shifter deal" and a reprint "Our views on Eastern Europe: Phoney communists crumble":

Resist job combination!

One of the methods being used by the MBTA [Boston's transit authority] management to shift the burden of the state budget crisis onto the backs of the workers is the method of job combination and job elimination. On the Green Line 17 full-time and 5 part-time shifters jobs have been eliminated. Meanwhile the work has been spread out among 195 operators who are being forced to move cars in the yard, make and break trains and throw switches at the beginning and end of their shifts and during any slack time between runs. Not only have the shifters been hurt by losing their work, not only are the operators being forced to do extra work, but a major safety problem has been

created. It is only a matter of time before an operator throws out his or her back throwing a switch or before a serious yard accident occurs because the experienced crews have been eliminated.

The Authority told the newspapers that it would only eliminate low use bus runs. But this is not what is going on. All over the system trips have been cut on some of the most heavily used bus routes. And even worse many heavy use runs have been combined, further reducing service ...

In rapid transit, list work for guards and motormen has been combined so that anyone who works the list must be able to do both guard and motorman work. On the Orange Line motormen who had been bumped back to guard position when part-time motormen were introduced are now being forced to do motorman work when the company is short-handed. ...

Why should we pay for the budget problems of the state and the Authority? These budget problems are caused by the downturn in the capitalist economy and by the pigging out of the wealthy at the federal and state troughs. The rich are always telling us how great their system is. But the minute they run into the slightest problem they scream that the workers must pay so that profits will not be hurt. For instance, the T pays out more in interest to the banks every year than it does in wages for all the bus drivers, train crews and repairmen in the system. And this account is rising by \$30 million a year. But you don't hear a word in the media about lazy overpaid bankers. You don't see the state legislature imposing a 10 percent cut in the interest payments to the banks. Instead the state is paying higher interest rates and squeezing the workers, the poor and the unemployed.

Workers, we must resist being squeezed to pay for the problems of the rich. ... Every month the economy gets weaker and the budget crisis gets worse. It is time to reject the turn-the-other cheek policy of our union "leaders" and start organizing to fight back. ■

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Shame!

Our union leaders' company attitude toward women workers

The MBTA's scheme of forcing operators to do shifters work has raised a number of serious safety concerns among the women operators. Particularly they are concerned about hurting themselves while throwing manual switches or being

assaulted while walking alone in the yards at night.

If you throw the switches every day it is not too difficult to do as you learn just the right moves. But if you do it only once in a while, which is what the operators will be doing, it can be a major exertion even for a large man. But when women operators raised their concern that they were now being forced to do work that they did not have to have the physical qualifications for when they were hired as operators, our union leaders replied just like company managers. Jimmy Duchaney, the vice-president of the union, has gone so far as to say, "If you can't do the work, get another job."

When women workers expressed their concern about being forced to park trains and walk alone in the yards late at night, they have gotten responses like, "Well, men can get raped too." It seems our union leaders have gotten so cozy with the company and the politicians that they have no shame whatsoever. The company attacks the workers,

the attack hurts the women workers in a special way, but rather than uniting all the workers to fight back the union leaders go along. Then they have the nerve to spread anti-woman propaganda against the women who demand a fight. How low can you go?

Unfortunately this is not an isolated incident. For years our union leaders have turned their backs on the harassment and abuse faced by women and minority workers. They have abandoned the newer workers and especially the part-timers. They have even frequently promoted divisive attitudes toward these sections of workers. Meanwhile the conditions for all the workers have gone down the tubes. In order to unite our ranks we must combat this divisive, sexist, racist, and full-time versus part-time poison. We must actively defend the rights of women, minority and part-time workers. An injury to one is an injury to all. We don't need a good old boys club that only takes care of a few. We need to untie all the workers. ■

"Right-to-life"—hypocritical concern for children Fight for free universal child care

Excerpted from the Feb. 6 issue of Detroit Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Detroit:

The right-wing, anti-abortion movement parades behind the banner of "right to life." They drop to their knees, wailing prayers of concern for babies, the children and the family. But when you look in the shadows behind the banner, you see hypocrisy and a disgustingly negligent attitude towards the children of the poor and working women. Bush and Reagan have been outspoken supporters of this right-wing movement. But their administrations (and even the Carter government before that) have refused to assist working women with their burning need for child care.

More women working—more children in need of child care

Finding adequate day care is a monumental problem for a woman or single parent in the work force. Those day-care facilities which do exist cost a fortune even for a single child—more than the cost of rent or house payments. Many of the facilities are inadequate. There are too many children and too few, underpaid staff, making for a rapid turnover of child-care workers and instability. And facilities are almost non-existent for those women who are forced to work evening or night shift, weekends, or long hours of overtime.

The number of women entering the work force is continuously growing. 58% of women are working today, up

from 34% in 1950. With the concessions forced on the working class, with much of the economy moving from industrial to service industry, the working class has grown poorer and poorer, forcing women to work just to make ends meet. Most women who work are forced into low paying jobs in sweatshops, hospitals, offices, stores or restaurants.

And there is a growing number of single mothers who must have assistance with their children or be driven down into the degrading poverty of the welfare system.

Congress adds hardly a drop in the bucket

Two years ago the Democrat's put up a legislation for child care, the Act for Better Child Care Services. It was a mere drop in the bucket of need even when it was originally proposed. But this drop has been evaporating away as the Democrats conceded to one after another of Bush's complaints.

Last summer the Senate finally passed a bill. (It is still pending in the House.) It calls for spending \$1.75 billion for 1990 (down from \$2.5 billion *originally*). And funding "as may be necessary" in '91-94. It will be left to future decisions by the capitalist politicians if further funding is necessary and at what level. In short, this means there is no serious long-term plans for financing day care.

Thirty percent of the bill is for tax credits. One such credit, the Earned Income Tax Credit, would provide up to \$500 for a child under four years of age, and up to \$750 for more than one child under four. With day care running

at an average of \$4000 a year per child, this tax credit would pay only six weeks of care for one child. And nothing is provided for five and six-year-olds, even though they too need child care. Or are we to leave them home alone to fend for themselves? Or maybe leave them home to baby-sit the babies for the 46 weeks a year the tax credit doesn't cover for their care?

The rest of the funding is suppose to be direct payments for services for the children of low income families. But much of the this money is being diverted to setting up a bureaucracy and providing liability insurance for the capitalist owners and managers, rather than for setting up child-care centers. A portion of the funding is also being set aside for "part-time programs" such as Head Start. Although Head Start is necessary for preparing four-year-olds for school, it is not day care. Even if children attend Head Start they will still need day care before and after the program if their mother works. Head Start funds should not be taken from the meager day-care funding.

What is left of the funds will be paid to the providers of the private, church related and public facilities, at the going rate to ensure their profitability. This bill is no beginning for a universal day-care system. It's just a little shot in the arm for private day-care owners and the government

bureaucracy. But little else.

In the meantime the capitalist employers have and will continue to rely on their traditional methods of dealing with working parents—harassment and intimidation, write ups and firings of those women or men who must take time off from work to care for their children who are sick, or have been injured, or if the baby-sitter fails to show.

Fight for universal free day care for all working people!

Working women and men, don't wait for the empty promises of the Republicans or Democrats. And don't put up with harassment by the capitalist employers and managers whose only concern is profit and productivity, the health and welfare of the children be damned.

Take up the fight for employer funded day-care in the factories, hospitals, postal facilities, office complexes and campuses, supplemented by community day care. Fight for an expansion of the pre-school, kindergarten and latch-key programs linked with the public schools. Oppose the right-wing anti-abortion movement and their hollow concern for children. Fight for universal free day care for all working people. ■

Postal service sick leave policy: If they're sick--fire them!

From the Jan. 21 issue of New York Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-New York:

Postal policy towards workers' health is an outrage. They want to use workers to the maximum while they are healthy, and throw them out, leaving them to their own resources, as soon as their health falters. A case currently going through the grievance process illustrates this. The case involves a carrier at FDR Station who is up for removal from the Postal Service for his attendance record.

Several years back, this carrier was found to have cancer. The carrier went through various kinds of treatment, including chemotherapy and the removal of his spleen. Facing cancer is difficult for anyone. Aside from physical pain and discomfort, it involves uncertainty about the future and financial strain for the family. Throughout the years postal workers have felt sympathy towards their fellow worker and have expressed it in various ways.

Yet things are different when it comes to management. Postal policy has been to harass this carrier, to place him on restriction (even while receiving treatment for cancer), to suspend him and remove him. Twice before, in recent years, management has tried to fire this worker for his attendance record. And today once again, in fact just as the Christmas season was starting, management has embarked

on a campaign to throw him out of the same grounds.

The spleen is not a vital organ; humans have been known to live long lives without them. Nevertheless, the spleen plays a central role in initiating immune reactions in the body, and people who have had their spleens removed tend to get infections easier. It is no wonder then that someone who has undergone a splenectomy will have a worse medical record and a worse attendance record at their job.

Is management aware of this? Have they taken this into consideration? As a matter of fact, yes, they have. But postal management applies cold capitalist logic when it comes to employees with medical problems. Management understands that there are medical reasons behind the attendance problem. To them, this means they cannot make the problem go away by simply intimidating the carrier. Therefore, as they see it, the problem translates into long-term costs. Management wants to rid itself of this employee precisely because he has a good excuse.

Harassment of workers who injure themselves on the job, or of those requesting light duty, is all too common. Now management is looking to establish the right to fire someone for these and similar "crimes". Postal workers are right to denounce management for this policy, and in expressing outrage about this case in particular. ■

Demonstrate against George Bush!

The following article is from vol. 2, #2 of Bay Area Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-San Francisco Bay Area:

On February 7 George Bush is coming to town to give a speech at the Hilton Hotel in San Francisco. A demonstration is being organized to protest against Bush's attacks on poor and working people at home and abroad.

Sure, Bush may be "popular" with the corporate news media and the ladies and gentlemen in Congress. They all applaud his dirty invasion of Panama. They nod consent as Bush steps up war against the people of Central America. Because they are yes-men for the bankers, Pentagon generals and other imperialist interests. But the workers and progressive people say: "Hands Off Central America!"

Come out and demonstrate against Bush! Denounce U.S. aggression against El Salvador and Nicaragua! Condemn the invasion and occupation of Panama!

Bush is taking the lead with further cutbacks against the workers and poor in this country. He is out to slash funding for social services and line the pockets of the rich. And the Democrats are showing that once again they're going along.

Come to the protest against Bush and build the fight against the cutbacks!

Bush is the foremost champion of the rich in their attacks on women's right to abortion. It's George Bush who praises the anti-abortion fanatics of Operation Rescue and their blockade of abortion clinics. And he is the leading light calling for legislation and court decisions denying women abortion rights.

Join in the demonstration against Bush to defend abortion rights and build the movement for all of women's rights!

Bush has taken up where Reagan left off in carrying forward the racist offensive of the rich. He is full of slick talk against bigotry while backing to the hilt the racist Supreme Court decisions that opened the doors wider to discrimination. Bush is the leader of the racist "war on drugs" that targets minorities and poor for repression.

Fight racism! Demonstration against Bush!

Workers and activists! Thousands have come into the streets to fight these attacks with demonstrations all across the country. Join in this growing resistance. Spread the word in workplaces, working class communities and schools that a demonstration is being built against Bush. Come out and protest this leader of the capitalist offensive. Build the struggle against the attacks of Bush and Congress! ■

New York: Transit Authority drug test scandal: **To hell with accuracy and treatment!**

From the Feb. 1 issue of New York Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-New York:

Last week, the Inspector General reported that of 11 test urine samples sent to a drug testing laboratory, six came back with incorrect findings. This test took place in the lab that did all drug testing for the TA from 1987-89! This is par for the course for the TA, which has already admitted in court that all drug testing for 1984 was faulty. The years 1985-86 are still under litigation.

Meanwhile, the union reports that the TA has backed away from its commitment to fund a drug treatment program. It seems that the TA was only interested in a treatment program if it was tied to random testing. No testing—no treatment, the TA is saying.

So what do these two items mean? They show that the TA's public statements about testing for safety and humanitarian reasons are a big load of bullshit. For one thing the TA is now developing a long history of complete disinterest in insuring accuracy in testing. The 1984 results were all

thrown out in court because the TA's lab was only doing one of the two required tests for drug indication, reporting false positive for, among other things, Advil.

The 1987-89 results, which resulted in the firing or suspension of 614 workers, were done by a non-New York State certified lab under, apparently, incredibly poor procedures. An error rate of 55%! Who knows how many innocent workers have been tarred and feathered by the TA brush!

At the same time, the TA is repudiating any interest in actually helping workers that are caught up in drug use. This "fire but don't rehabilitate" policy is the same cynical Washington policy that says there is plenty of money for police and prisons, but none for treatment. By making it more difficult to get treatment, the TA actually impairs safety.

The heart of the TA's drug policy is an effort to terrorize workers. Given the very great likelihood of a false positive test, and the fact that drugs show up in a person's urine weeks after impairment has actually ended, the TA

can use the threat of testing as a sword hanging over workers' heads. It is a well-known fact, for example, that in the Track Department the threat of testing is used to

keep gangs out in the rain or prevent individuals from reporting injuries or accidents. TA testing, far from increasing safety, actually decreases it! ■

From the Nicaraguan workers' press: The Salvadoran people will uproot the murderous regime

Below is the editorial from the November 14-15 issue of El Pueblo, translated by the Workers' Advocate staff:

The vigorous eruption of the Salvadoran people shows the real sentiment of the Central American peoples against the pro-imperialist forces and governments.

Even though a sector of the FMLN is accumulating this revolutionary energy to improve its negotiating capacity with the pro-imperialist forces, there is no doubt that the Salvadorans are ready to triumph or die. The Nicaraguan people are expressing the same thing in their confrontation against the crimes of the contras and the maneuvers of imperialism through its internal agents [the capitalist political forces inside Nicaragua].

One must ask why it [a sector of the FMLN] insists on negotiating the struggle, the sacrifice, the blood spilled by these peoples if they, the people themselves, show by their actions what future they want and how determined they are to fight for it?

The only possible answer is either [this sector of the FMLN] has no confidence in the force that a fighting people represents, or it is afraid of unleashing forces which, in their advance, could roll over it, too.

One thing that history, Salvadoran as much as Nicaraguan, has made clear is that negotiations with imperialism and the mercenary forces at its service have never been beneficial. To expect to benefit from negotiating with imperialism is to be outside of history and to forget that our peoples have only suffered plunder, death and destruction from these forces.

The fact is, now that the people are showing concretely and in practice their disposition to fight, the revolutionaries in Salvador must deploy themselves to push the struggle so that the people's spirit will acquire the strength of a popular insurrection, which will once and for all uproot that corrupt and murderous apparatus that imperialism has maintained against the people.[]

War and negotiations in El Salvador

The following article from the Nov. 14-15 issue of El

Pueblo was written by Carlos Lucas Arauz, one of the leaders of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua. It has been translated by the Workers' Advocate staff.

If the forceful guerrilla offensive in El Salvador is not merely a pressure tactic, and is really a strategic siege in preparation for an insurrectionary assault by the masses, it means that the repressive regime in El Salvador has never been so close to falling—like a giant with feet of clay—before the military thrust of the guerrillas.

The military offensive of the FMLN has counted on the political and moral factor which has generated a more militant mood of support and participation among certain sections of the masses. This is from their indignation at the terrorist outrage perpetrated against the National Federation of Salvadoran Unions (FENASTRAS) which resulted in 10 dead and over 30 wounded on October 31. A civilian union local was criminally attacked by the regime's forces at the same time that the FMLN was holding direct talks with the death squad government.

In these talks the FMLN, subscribing to the strategic thesis of "a negotiated political solution to the Salvadoran conflict," proposed the possibility of forming a single national army based on the fusion of its own forces with those of the fascist army, [which would be] supposedly purged.

The [Salvadoran army's recent] criminal act against the union leaders caught the popular conscience and put under discussion the issue of what really is the political and material function of the armed struggle in El Salvador.

The most revolutionary and progressive sections of the guerrillas are at this moment giving their reply to the regime. And, most probably, the social-democratic sectors tied to the FMLN are more than surprised at the forcefulness of the attacks and the lack of combat morale on the part of the soldiers and officialdom of the fascist army. It's like pushing hard on a door, which in reality is loose and on the point of falling off.

The guerrilla offensive in El Salvador also has another important effect on the direct talks between the FSLN government and the contras in New York, in the sense that imperialism will be confronted [simultaneously] with the announced anti-contra offensive in Nicaragua and by the

guerrilla offensive broken out in El Salvador.

Imperialism will have two of its Central American armies at risk. That will force it to accept simultaneous negotiations with the Salvadoran guerrillas and with the Sandinistas. Imperialism will nevertheless try to preserve its forces—the contras in Nicaragua and the fascist army in El Salvador.

Here one can apply the advice given by Alfredo Cesar (1) to the Somocista colonel in the letter reprinted in *Barricada*, Nov.13. (2) This advice is to “gain time.” Imperialism will try to obtain a breathing space until after the Nicaraguan elections, and try to get this breathing space in El Salvador as well.

In both countries the possibility has been raised of a special transition via a coalition government. In Nicaragua this would integrate Sandinistas with contras; and, in El Salvador, guerrillas with fascists. In El Salvador, as in Nicaragua, this has been justified with the argument that the conditions don't exist for an annihilation of the counterrevolution—of the contras in Nicaragua and of the death squad government in El Salvador:

Imperialism calculates that a political solution of this type will give it time to relaunch the military solution in both countries, striving to obtain its conditions. In this way it hopes to weaken the Salvadoran guerrillas and the revolutionary spirit which remains in a sector of Sandinism, and in the core of the Nicaraguan people.

But an unexpected triumph by the [Salvadoran] guerrillas would upset this scheme for negotiations. In this way, whether we like it or not, much of our political life depends on the thoughts and desires of the Salvadoran popular fighters who are launching themselves to win or die, on whether or not they remember the precious words of Roque Dalton: “Never forget that the least fascist among the fascists are also fascists.” ■

Notes by the Supplement:

(1) Alfredo Cesar is one of the top leaders and ideologist of the CIA-organized contras. He was at one time a Sandinista leader, having joined the Sandinistas at the time of the upsurge against the tyrant Somoza. Cesar is one of the contras who wants to apply “political” means to achieve his end, and was present at the meeting last year of the Socialist International.

(2) *Barricada* is a major pro-Sandinista newspaper in Nicaragua. ■

Results of the Central American “peace plan”

Below is the editorial from the Nov. 11-22 issue of El Pueblo, translated by the Workers' Advocate staff. A month later the latest Central American conference forced the Sandinistas to join in a condemnation of the Salvadoran guerrillas and endorse the fascist Cristiani government of the

ultra-right ARENA party in El Salvador as the product of “democratic, pluralistic and participative processes.” Then-president Arias of El Salvador openly talked of wanting to give special support to the Salvadoran government because Cristiani's position had been undermined by the month-old offensive of the FMLN.

In return for taking part in denouncing the Salvadoran people, the Sandinista leadership received little. The peace plan has descended from promises to disband the contras, to the establishment of conditions for aid to the contras in the name of inducing them to disband. International imperialism is called on to guarantee the results. And there is an appeal for a UN observation force on the Nicaraguan border.

In short, things continued as the article below indicated.

The negotiations between the Sandinista government and the armed counterrevolution [the contras] have gone as expected. Honduras is abstaining from participating in the discussion and impudently declares that this is a problem among Nicaraguans. Honduras is negating its responsibility and its agreement to get the contras off its territory.

It amounts to laughing in the face of the Sandinistas, who have withdrawn the accusation they had made at [the UN's world court located at the Dutch city called] the Hague that Honduras had lent its land to the mercenaries so they could attack the Nicaraguan people.

The observers, verifiers and witnesses only have eyes for making the Sandinista government promise to open space for the contras.

They [the contras] declare themselves incapable of achieving demobilization by the arranged date and at the same time they support Bermudez' proposal for the Sandinistas to lay out the carpet for them and set aside territory to serve as “sanctuaries” for their forces during the elections.

On the other hand the international forces are seizing the moment to express their intentions and announce changes in their agreements to supply oil to Nicaragua, and to delay aid and donations until after February. In sum, they are applying pressure for Nicaragua to let in the contras complete with weapons, [their own political] parties, and dollars.

The traditional Sandinista maneuvers really have their space reduced this time. The inflation and lack of economic resources can hit harder than a disadvantageous agreement at the possibility for a Sandinista electoral victory. Sovereignty is being sold at the price of dollars to buy power. Amnesty has its price in dollars; repatriation has its projected investments; the resettlements as well; and the sanctuaries certainly have the highest price.

The suspension of the talks only to resume them on Monday shows the optimism on both sides on what they have achieved and expect to achieve. It points to the contras obtaining their objective of participating in the elections with their armed forces quartered on national territory.

This would be a strategic concession to imperialism

which would finally succeed in introducing its mercenary army into Nicaraguan territory while its politicians accumulate forces with military support.

The social pact against the workers means we have to deepen our work of independent organization. In the face of the Sandinistas and the counterrevolution, this is our only guarantee that the revolutionary perspective won't be demobilized, dismantled and annihilated. ■

Arms to the people! Another 11 peasants murdered

Below is an article from the Nov. 2-3 issue of El Pueblo, translated by the Workers' Advocate staff:

Eleven peasants were murdered by counterrevolutionary groups in the last 24 hours, announced the Office of Public Relations of the Defense Ministry of the Sixth Region.

The information official gave us to understand that on October 31 a peasant was murdered in the Cuatro Esquinas section in Pantasma, and that the same day seven other

peasants met the same fate in the La Vigia y Piragua section.

This same day in the La Paila sector, 25 kilometers [about 15½ miles] northeast of Rio Blanco, EPS [the Nicaraguan army] troops found the corpses of three peasants with visible signs of torture, naked and beheaded.

The local authorities presume that the bodies, though not identified, correspond to three peasants who were kidnapped two days before near the same site.

Some 1,200 counterrevolutionaries, of the 2,500 in the country, operate in this region, according to official estimates.

These murders show the degree of defenselessness that the people, especially the peasantry, are facing. The majority of cooperatives attacked and peasants murdered have been taken unwarned and unarmed. This shows that the ceasefire, unilaterally declared by the government, has meant demobilization and disarming.

The recent announcement of the end of the ceasefire, from President Daniel Ortega, must overcome this situation, which has claimed hundreds of victims, by calling for a political and military mobilization of the whole country. ■

Communist workers of the Philippines on recent events

Below we reprint excerpts from a statement of December 6 by the Union of Proletarian Revolutionaries of the Philippines (KPRP). We have made minor grammatical changes in the translation provided us when the meaning was clear.

December 1989 coup attempt: Anti-masses, anti-worker, anti-revolution!

In the strongest possible terms, we condemn the bloodiest coup attempt and the reactionary war it unleashed during the first four (or more) days of December 1989. From our view, such attempt and war were, most of all, anti-masses, anti-worker and anti-revolution.

First of all, the civilian masses, particularly the workers and semi-proletarians in the affected areas, were the ones most hit by the reactionary war between the military rebels and government troopers. Many of them were killed, wounded, had their houses destroyed or burned, or were forced to seek refuge in evacuation centers.

Secondly, the coup attempt was planned and put into action by the reactionary putschist groups including the Reform the AFP [Armed forces of the Philippines] Movement—Soldiers of the Filipino People (RAM-SFP) led by "Gringo" Honasan and the Marcos loyalist nationalist Army of the Philippines (NAP) led by Jose Maria Zumel. Their immediate aim was to overthrow the Aquino regime and establish their militarist rule. But they always stressed that any successful power grab of theirs will only serve as a stepping stone to their all-out counterrevolutionary and anti-communist rule. In other words, in the final analysis, they have been consciously oriented to the destruction of all anti-imperialist and democratic struggles and especially the revolutionary struggle of the workers and other toilers.

Thirdly, the failed coup attempt and its suppression by the U.S.-supported Aquino-Ramos-AFP have been transformed into a well-spring of pro-imperialist, pro-Aquino and pro-Ramos-AFP propaganda. They who are enemies of the workers and toilers are posing as "saviors", "defenders" and "heroes" of the people, democracy and freedom. While they dealt blows against the coup plotters,

already, by way of deceptive propaganda, they have also hit the masses.

Fourthly, by way of "Bush saving Aquino", by way of Clark Air Base sending F-4 Phantom jet fighters and these jets fighters crushing immediately the air power of the Honasan-Zumel putschist groups, the Aquino regime and the bourgeoisie in general have been all the more reinforced in their position for the continued stay of the U.S. military bases in the country. But the reality remains: the bases serve as protector of the U.S. interests in the Philippines and in the Asia-Pacific region; they are here to suppress all the anti-imperialist movements and especially the revolutionary movement of the workers, peasants and other toilers.

Fifthly, the coup plot failed but, like the August 1987 coup attempt, it achieved a certain victory. Now the government is set to increase the military budget for the rehabilitation of the ruins caused by the reactionary war and also for additional concessions for the military in its [the government's] efforts to do away with or at least minimize the immediate conditions that give rise to coup attempts. It is possible that such concessions include additional wages and/or privileges, and it is certain that such also include a positive response by the regime to the plotters' permanent demand: a further sharpening and intensification of the regime's counterrevolutionary and anti-communist warfare. Nevertheless, the anti-Aquino reactionary die-hards will never be satisfied with whatever concessions the government makes to the military personnel and to some of their demands, because they believe that they alone have the capability to solve the many problems facing the nation, especially the threat to the status quo represented by the national-democratic movement and the revolution. Meanwhile, any intensification of militarization and fascization is always directed at not only the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists and revisionists, but, most of all, the militant workers, peasants and other toilers.

Thus, we strongly condemn the coup attempt and the power-hunger plotters, such as the RAM boys of Honasan, the Marcos loyalists, the Nationalista Party (NP) supporters, and their CIA allies. They are among the exploiters and oppressors of the workers and peasants;

But, while we condemn the coup forces, we stress that we are not one with the forces that fought and suppressed the coup attempt. U.S. imperialism, the Aquino regime and the AFP are known enemies of the Filipino workers and peasants. Their suppression of the attempt did not serve the toiling masses; they served themselves and the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses the workers and other toilers.

Thus, we express that our condemning of the coup

attempt contains our basic condemnation of the ruling bourgeoisie and landlord class and of the capitalist system which is the root of the existing economic crisis, political instability and destructive coup attempts and possible successful coup d'etats. Indeed, our condemnation would remain only in the level of meaningless words and emotions if we didn't struggle and continue the struggle against the bourgeoisie and landlord class and the capitalist system, the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist-landlord government, the establishment of the worker-peasant government, and the creation of a socialist society.

Lastly, we express our unity with the particular sections of the masses who suffered or are still suffering as a result of the reactionary war,

We express our unity with those masses who were actively participating in protest actions like those during the February 1986 "EDSA revolution" [that brought Aquino to power] but are now passive. We unite with them in their continuous distancing from the reactionary forces including the Aquino government and also from the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist movements and [in their] concomitant striving for class independence. They are gradually realizing the necessity of a genuine independent movement for their emancipation.

We express our unity especially with those groups of workers, peasants and other toilers who are continuously struggling against the foreign imperialists, capitalists, landlords, against the government and also against the opportunists in the ranks of their movement and organizations.

And we call for the unity of all the exploited and oppressed masses in view of and against possible future attempts by the reactionary putschists, but, most of all, unity in the continuous struggle against the Filipino bourgeoisie, landlords, their foreign imperialist allies, unity in the struggle for the downfall of the capitalist-landlord Aquino regime and for the establishment of the worker-peasant government, unity for socialism. But such unity and struggle can succeed only if they are in unity and struggle against the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeois who pretend to be the liberators of the poor and oppressed, against social-democracy and the various forms of revisionism, especially Maoism.

Workers, poor peasants and other toilers, unite and build your independent revolutionary movement! Reject the petty-bourgeois leadership, Maoism and other forms of revisionism and establish the leadership of the working class in the Philippine revolution.

Long live the working class and toiling masses! Long live the Philippine revolution! Long live the international working class! Long live the world revolution! ■

From the Documents of the Founding Conference of the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden: Resolution on imperialism, the struggle of the oppressed people and the tasks of solidarity work

The last issue of the Supplement began the publication of the documents from the founding of the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden (Marxist-Leninistiska Förbundet). The MLLS is the successor of the Communist League of Norrköping and is continuing its journal Röd Gryning (Red Dawn). The "Programmatic declaration of the Marxist-Leninist League" appeared in the last issue of the Supplement, and further resolutions will appear in the future. Our comments on the resolution below appear elsewhere in this issue of the Supplement.

The MLLS can be contacted, and the founding documents can be obtained in English or Swedish, by writing

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The text below is based on the English translation from the MLLS, except that we have made some minor grammatical changes when the meaning was clear. Emphasis is as in the original.

We are living in the epoch of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. On the basis of the steadily intensified concentration of capital, the old, historically still progressive competitive capitalism turned at the beginning of this century into a qualitatively new stage, the highest and last, the parasitic, rotting and dying stage of capitalism. Imperialism shows the following features:

- a) Industrial, mercantile and bank capital has merged into monopolist finance capital.
- b) The supreme economic law of the monopolies is the striving for maximum profits.
- c) Export of capital becomes crucially important. The international monopolies have divided the world between themselves, and the struggle between the biggest capitalist states for redivision has started.

Imperialism means that all the contradictions of capitalism, of which the fundamental one is between the social character of the production process and the private appropriation of the result of production, is sharpened and put on its edge, which creates a constant, general crisis.

Imperialism's character as a world-wide system also means that classical competitive capitalism has become an

impossibility—as such cannot survive and develop independent of the world market, whose peripheral parts are subordinated to its centers. The various degrees of dependency of various countries—from sub-imperialist to completely neo-colonial countries—are a result of imperialism's international division of labor. The national bourgeoisie in the dependent countries and oppressed nations is, thus, vacillating and schizophrenic in its class interests in relation to imperialism. On the one hand, imperialism hinders their independent development, but on the other hand, they are dependent on imperialism since their base is in the point of support of imperialism (complementary industries, infrastructure etc.). Therefore, the stand of the national bourgeoisie tends toward national-reformism; when the national-democratic liberation struggle of the masses is put on its edge, the bourgeoisie will by necessity seek a deal with imperialism.

Practice has shown that a independent-from-imperialism national capital accumulation can take place, but then only in the form of state capitalism. This has been the case in e.g. China and Cuba, as a stratum of petty-bourgeois intelligentsia has been able to act as a substitute for the national bourgeoisie, organizing a victorious guerilla war with a broad, although passive, mass support, and, afterwards, through the state apparatus organize a kind of planned economy, protected from the world market. All the historical tasks of the classical bourgeois revolution has in this way been carried out—except for the establishment of political freedom. But the very precondition for the independent economy—the splendid isolation from the world market—was soon to become a drag on the development of the productive forces, and has in all these cases led to stagnation and decay. Therein lies the essential reason why most such countries have more or less opened their borders for foreign capital, from so-called joint ventures to special "free zones" etc. It is as well an important reason why revolutions of the same kind, which have taken place after 1974, when the world economy entered a new period of crisis, have not succeeded in—in several cases not even tried to—establish state capitalism, but instead, like in e.g. Nicaragua or Zimbabwe, have resulted in more or less stable compromises with the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. Most likely, this "capitalism in one country" solution is a finished parenthesis.

The "parenthesis" in question does, however, confirm two points—first, that national independence in relation to imperialism can be achieved only by breaking the frames of "normal" capitalism, i.e. bourgeois private property, and, secondly, that national independence leads nowhere, can not be firmly upheld, if it is confined to one country. It thereupon follows that, even in the most oppressed and undeveloped countries, it is the task of the proletariat—however young, small and weak it may be—to take the head in the national-democratic liberation struggle, carrying it to victory, in alliance with the peasant masses etc. A victory which, in essence, regardless of form, thus would be of a socialist character. Then, the further spreading of the revolution becomes a question of survival for the individual workers' and peasant state.

Also in the state capitalist countries, revolution is on the order of the day—class against class. In a world ruled by imperialism, no capital, not even one that tries to create for itself an isolated sphere of its own, can play a progressive role, although it indirectly is a reserve for the international proletariat in so far as it helps weaken imperialism. Any special stages, in which the workers have to abstain from their class independence in favor of some "popular front" policy in alliance with "their" national bourgeoisie, is thus out of the question.

The task put on the order of the day in the entire world by history, for the Marxist-Leninist parties, the proletariat and its allies, is to smash the chains of capital and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. Imperialism forces the international proletariat to unite in a uniform army, consisting of workers from all countries, regardless of state borders and differences of nationality, culture, language, race or sex. These—and these alone—are able to play the role of final grave-diggers of the system. We are heading towards an era of increasing convulsions, wherein workers more and more appear on the scene as an independent and leading force. The recent examples of Algeria, Venezuela, Brazil, South Africa, South Korea etc. bear witness to that. The rebellions in Palestine, Burma, China and other countries show, if not a proletarian leadership, so at least an essential degree of proletarian participation. The revolution is a question taken up for its solution!

The consequences for the line of the communists in the work of the solidarity movement here in Sweden must be, amongst other things:

a) To seek to contradict tailing after petty-bourgeois leaderships of the above-mentioned kind, like e.g. the leaderships of the PLO, ANC, Filipino "Communist" Party, FSLN and others. Organizations not being in power are to be supported in relation to the concrete struggle they conduct against imperialism, and in so far as they do not hinder the independent class organization of the proletariat. Solidarity work does not exclude, but, on the contrary presupposes, independent thinking and acting, and that not least in relation to the diplomatic maneuvering of the petty-bourgeois leaderships.

b) Those who are in power are not to be supported, except under certain conditions of concrete threat from imperialism and its allies, and then the support must be a critical one, military but not political support. An example of this is the case of Nicaragua, in which we unconditionally support its struggle against contras and its right to defend itself against the threat from U.S. imperialism, while, at the same time, we do not do this out of solidarity with the FSLN, whose vacillating role we expose and condemn, but out of solidarity with the workers and peasants of Nicaragua and their interest of a continuing revolutionary process.

c) To especially emphasize the role and tasks of the working class, trying to direct as much support as possible, materially and morally alike, to militant trade unions and other forms of independent class organization. In order not to favor dependence on Swedish imperialism, which under the cover of "neutrality" seeks to get a foothold everywhere, or the disastrous influence of social-democracy, such help shall not be channeled through aid organs of the state or through the social-democratic party and the trade union apparatus, but directly through the solidarity movement. ■

On the Swedish comrades' resolution on imperialism and the oppressed countries

The Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden (MLLS) has recently been founded and published the documents of its founding conference. In the spirit of collaboration between

the communist activists of different lands, we wish to discuss our disagreements with a number of views expressed in there. This article will deal with the "resolution on

imperialism, the struggle of the oppressed people and the tasks of solidarity work," which is reprinted in this issue of the *Supplement*.

Solidarity work is a prominent feature of Swedish politics. The Swedish bourgeoisie itself seeks contacts with reformist-led popular movements and governments in the oppressed and dependent countries. The solidarity politics of the opportunist left in Sweden, in its support for the reformist stands of various liberation organizations, runs the danger of being a left echo of Swedish imperialism.

Red Dawn, the journal of the MLLS, and previously of its predecessor, the Communist League of Norrköping, takes various steps to break away from reformist solidarity work. It does not restrict itself to the fashionable support for reformist-led groups, but supports Marxist-Leninist revolutionary forces, such as the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua and the Communist Party of Iran. It also criticizes the stands of the ANC, PLO, etc., and it seeks to bring out the class role of the proletariat in the oppressed and dependent countries.

The MLLS has had less success in establishing a general theoretical framework for these stands. Their resolution takes many steps back from their best stands in solidarity work. And it shows for example that they still paint a

glorified picture of national independence, reconciling this with the advocacy of social revolution on the grounds that, in the era of imperialism, such independence is allegedly no longer possible for the dependent countries. As well, they have been swayed by the Tony Cliff and the "IS tendency", who differ from the local trends of trotskyism that MLLS deals with in their denunciation of Soviet revisionism as capitalism, but who are still utterly trotskyist and anti-Leninist. In many cases, our disagreements with the MLLS have to do with concepts that the MLLS has either borrowed from, or found confirmation in the writings of, Tony Cliff and company.

We will begin by discussing the last part of the resolution, where it deals with the tasks of the solidarity movement. Then we will deal with general views concerning the nature of revolutionary struggle in the oppressed countries.

On the solidarity movement

The journal *Red Dawn* carries out criticism of the PLO and other reformist-led liberation organizations. And the resolution strives to combine support for the struggle against imperialism and the local regimes with criticism of the views of the PLO, ANC, etc. It correctly states that "Solidarity work does not exclude, but, on the contrary presupposes, independent thinking and acting..."

But there are problems with the way the MLLS elaborates this stand.

For one thing, it would have been better if the resolution had stressed solidarity with the revolutionary movement in the oppressed countries, and showing how the different trends and organizations in those countries relate to this movement, rather than putting all the stress on the organizations in and of themselves. Both from the theoretical and the practical point of view, there is value to placing the issue of the revolutionary movement in the first place. The task of the class-conscious proletariat with respect to building a solidarity movement for the oppressed peoples is not, say, to replace support committees for the ANC with critical support committees for the ANC, but to build up a fundamentally different type of work. The task is to encourage fervent support for revolutionary struggle, build up anti-imperialist and internationalist agitation, and draw the working masses into it. This provides the framework to criticize reformism and opportunism in the movements in the oppressed countries as well as in the solidarity movement. It also provides the framework to provide special support to genuinely proletarian organizations in the oppressed countries. This does not mean boycotting the overall solidarity movement, but establishing a communist framework for work within it.

Perhaps however the resolution puts the organizations in the first place simply out of a preoccupation with certain practical problems in the solidarity movement. But it seems to us that the way the resolution defines the communist attitude to the various organizations in the oppressed countries is not right either.

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The question of the unions

This can be seen vividly in point c) of the tasks the resolution puts forward. In essence it identifies support for the working class trend in the oppressed countries with support for "militant trade unions" and other unnamed organizations. But the militant unions are associated with different political stands, just as the political organizations, are. So the question arises, which trade unions are being referred to?

The resolution goes on to oppose having aid channeled to these unions through the Swedish state, or social-democratic party, or trade union apparatus. This shows the desire of the MLLS to break solidarity work off from Swedish imperialism and social-democracy. Unfortunately, however, this also seems to show that the resolution is referring to those trade unions which imperialism and the social-democrats also may give aid to. This presumably means such union federations as COSATU in South Africa, which embraces various trends but mainly supports ANC-style politics, or perhaps the KMU (May First) federation in the Philippines, which is related to the CP of the Philippines. These unions are, in the context of their country, not the right-wing sell-out unions, but among the "movement" unions. But they have their own political orientations; these orientations are towards reformism of one sort or the other; and these political orientations affect the way they conduct their organizing and their struggles.

In a resolution that deals with the petty-bourgeois stands of various liberation movements in the oppressed countries, it is a grievous mistake to avoid the question of the political trends among the trade unions and simply call them "independent class organizations". It threatens to take back with one hand what the resolution offers with the other hand when it criticizes the leaderships of the ANC, CPP, etc.

It is true that the spread of unions, of whatever trend for the moment, shows a desire for organization on the part of the workers. But the flooding of workers and youth into "militant" political organizations also shows the growth of revolutionary instinct. Yet the resolution doesn't just praise such political organizations as militants, but recognizes the need to criticize their political stance. It is inconsistent to give up such criticism when it comes to the unions.

If this is not simply a careless oversight, if agitation is really done according to point c) of the resolution, it would threaten to create a number of misunderstandings. The idea might be created that the politics is suspect and petty-bourgeois, but trade union activity is the real sphere of the class-conscious proletarian. It would also undermine the seriousness of the criticism of the ANC, CPP, FSLN, etc.

What about the proletarian revolutionary forces?

At the same time, the resolution fails to bring out the special role of the political trends which actually seeking to

organize proletarian independence, first and foremost being the Marxist-Leninist forces. Although the MLLS supports politically and materially such organizations as the CP of Iran and the MLP of Nicaragua, the resolution doesn't seem to deal with this. Perhaps they are supposed to be included in the term "other forms of independent class organization" in part c). But no indication is given of how this term is to be understood.

Thus the resolution doesn't explain the significance of the attempts to build genuinely Marxist-Leninist or proletarian organization, or give a special appeal in their support, etc.

This also comes up with respect to the issue raised by the resolution of material aid. The class-conscious proletarian forces in the oppressed countries generally have few resources. Whether trade union centers like the Workers' Front of Nicaragua and the Bukluran unions in the Philippines, or political organizations like the MLP of Nicaragua and the KPRP, they are not getting aid from social-democracy and imperialism. In practice, Red Dawn has dealt with material aid for Marxist-Leninist forces. But when talking about material aid for "militant trade unions and other forms of independent class organization", the resolution doesn't seem to be talking about aiding these forces. Instead the resolution paints a utopian picture of purifying the methods of providing aid to, presumably, COSATU, KMU, etc. Such aid is to be freed of social-democratic and imperialist connection. This is a hopeless task. The social-democrats and imperialists have far greater resources than the class-conscious proletarian forces; and the aid of the social-democrats and imperialists is in any case regarded more highly by the ANC, FSLN, etc. (precisely because it does indicate making contacts with imperialism).

The issue of critical support for the ANC, PLO, FSLN, etc.

There are also problems with the way the resolution deals with the stand towards the political organizations. Instead of simply saying that one should speak openly on the policies of the various trends, denounce reformist treachery, and render support first and foremost to the revolutionary toilers, it lays stress on defining different shades of "support" for opportunist-led organizations.

It is true that support for a revolutionary struggle, and for the toilers and revolutionaries engaging in that struggle, renders, in some sense or other, support for all the organizations that are taking part in that struggle. And in particular, one is also giving political support in some sense to the dominant organization waging the struggle, even if one is critical of its policies and rendering fervent support to the stand of another organization in the struggle. And failure to render enthusiastic support to the anti-apartheid struggle, the Palestinian struggle, etc. for fear of rendering some sort of support to the ANC, PLO, etc. would be utter sectarianism.

However the resolution ties itself up in knots formulating this. For one thing, the general principle is true both with respect to organizations in or out of power. But the resolution distinguishes between them in part a) and part b) in an unclear way. In one case it says the "support must be a critical one", but in the other case it apparently describes critical support without using that term. Why this distinction? The real issue is support for the revolution, and clarity on the relationship of various organizations and political trends to the revolutionary movement. In this context, whether these organizations hold power is important only in so far as it affects their relation to the revolution and the organization of the toilers. (Yes, the role of organizations can change dramatically when they take power. But this change is measured against yardstick of what is going on in the revolutionary and popular movements.)

"Military but not political support"

Most of Part b) is dedicated to defending the formulation of "military but not political support". This seems to be one of the things they have borrowed from the "IS tendency" and Tony Cliff.

At first glance, this phrase seems to describe certain situations where one supports a liberation war, while criticizing the reformist politics of the dominant organization waging that war. But with similar logic, someone might eventually give the opposite slogan, "political but not military support", to describe a situation where a reformist-led liberation organization is engaging in sectarian violence against others although it is still building a political movement against imperialism. And, for that matter, suppose one supports a liberation war but is critical of the military way it is conducted? What happens then to the supposed separation between military and political matters?

When such a slogan as "military but not political support" is given in a concrete situation, then one has to judge the particular meaning that is being given it. But since this slogan is theoretically muddled at best, and has a number of practical drawbacks, it should not be put forward as a general pattern.

Marxism has always held that war is the continuation of politics by other means. To support a military action is to be involved in the politics that lies behind this military action. To say that one can support the use of bombs and bayonets in a struggle, without by that very fact giving it some sort of political support, is the most absurd hypocrisy. It is possible for revolutionaries to take part in or support a war while fiercely criticizing their allies or other forces. But this cannot be described as a lack of any political support. It is impossible to support a war without this support having political implications.

Thus the phrase "military but not political support" has the danger of suggesting that politics is just the realm of empty declarations and hypocritical platitudes, divorced from relation to events in the real world, like wars. Instead

of moving activists forward to seeing how reformist politics and class relations affect liberation wars, it tends to hide the connection. It suggests that one can divorce oneself from the "political" of anything by pointing to a high-minded verbal declaration, just like a capitalist gives "financial but not moral" support to exploitation by paying starvation wages but going to church on Sunday and singing hymns to the equality of all souls.

In fact, the trotskysts, who are the main ones putting forward the slogan of "military but not political" support, have used it to develop a politics of hypocrisy. They can call themselves the greatest "political" opponents of various regimes, while rendering "military support" to them.

For example, some trotskysts in the U.S., such as the "Bolshevik Tendency" and the "Spartacists", rendered fervent "military support" to the Soviet Union's brutal intervention in Afghanistan while hypocritically insisting that this wasn't political support for Soviet revisionism.

Meanwhile Tony Cliff's "IS tendency", including the SWP of Britain, used this formula to say that they "politically" opposed the bloody hangman regime of Iran, while at the same time speculating on the conditions to give "military support" to these same hangmen and butchers. During the Persian Gulf incidents they wondered aloud if the Islamic regime in Iran would become a bastion of anti-imperialism.

The example of Nicaragua

The resolution gives the example of Nicaragua to illustrate the idea of "military but not political support". This is a good example, so let's look into it.

At first sight, the expression of "military but not political support" seems to have some credibility with respect to Nicaragua (as opposed to, say, Afghanistan) because we oppose the military aggression against Nicaragua, but we do not support the stands of the FSLN in the debate among the Nicaraguan revolutionaries. This makes it look like there are two separate spheres, military and political. But then one looks closer.

Take the question of the contra war. Both the MLL of Sweden and our Party, along with all progressive forces around the world, oppose the CIA-organized contra aggression against Nicaragua.

But why? Only because the contras are using military means, and not restricting themselves to political means?

But we also oppose the U.S. economic blockade of Nicaragua, although it is "nonviolent", and we oppose the U.S. pouring millions of dollars into Nicaragua to support right-wing political campaigns. We oppose the strangling of the Nicaraguan revolution by imperialism or the local bourgeoisie. That is, we oppose the politics behind the contra aggression, and not just the military terrorism. We oppose the arson and murder and terrorism of the CIA, and we oppose the political lies and nonviolent forms of pressure and destabilization against Nicaragua.

Furthermore, while we welcome the military defeat of

the contras, we do not agree with how the FSLN has waged this war. It demobilized the masses and the popular militias and laid stress solely on a regular army on the revisionist pattern. Furthermore, the way it abandoned the cause of the poor peasants in the countryside also harmed this war.

Anti-imperialist agitation and the separation of the political and military spheres

Meanwhile, in the U.S., the Democratic Party hides its aggressive stand against Nicaragua by constantly saying that the problem with U.S. policy is simply the use of excessive military force. The Democrats put forward that contra terrorism is wrong, but the political strangling of Nicaragua is just fine. Most of them actually support some form of contra violence, but used more subtly than the Reagan did. But some Democrats actually want to replace the contra war altogether by other means. In either case, the Democrats use the ideology of separating the military and political spheres to whitewash their stand of strangling Nicaragua.

It is the ABCs of communist work among the masses to expose the fraudulent way in which the Democrats separate the military crimes of the contras from the imperialist politics that lies behind it. And the same thing goes for U.S. intervention in El Salvador, or for the issue of nuclear war, etc. It is necessary to tirelessly combat the naive idea that the politics of imperialism and the military crimes are two separate spheres. How then can we turn around and use a slogan like "military but not political support for the FSLN," which relies for its credibility on this same naive but mistaken separation of wars from politics? Why not instead give wholehearted support, both "political" and "military," to the Nicaraguan revolution and the Nicaraguan toilers, and from this stand of total solidarity criticize the FSLN leadership for putting forward harmful politics?

And does it explain support for the MLPN?

The slogan "military but not political support" also is muddled with respect to support for the communist stand in Nicaragua. It doesn't explain why the MLL of Sweden and our Party render support to the MLP of Nicaragua. The FSLN uses mainly political means against the MLPN, but it also resorts to force (disarming the MILPAS militia, imprisonment, etc.) Whether they use violent or peaceful means to combat the MLPN, we still support the MLPN. And there is also the fact that the MLPN criticizes the military program of the FSLN.

Does it explain the method of supporting the Nicaraguan revolution?

But perhaps the term "military but not political support" refers not to what one supports about Nicaragua, but how one supports it?

Here the expression is less than useless. How does the MLLS or our Party oppose the contra aggression? Isn't it by political means? Doesn't it involve politically organizing against the contra aggression, just as our support for the MLPN involves politically organizing?

On the analysis of imperialism and the revolutionary movement in the oppressed countries

At this point, we will leave the particular tasks with respect to the solidarity movement and deal with the resolution's general views on the revolutionary movement in the oppressed countries.

In general, the MLLS apparently opposes the Marxist theory concerning the different stages of the revolution and presumably disagrees with views such as those set forward in Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*. It seems to hold that, since this is the era of imperialism, socialist revolution is immediately on the agenda everywhere. And it seems to say that any conception of different stages in the revolution automatically means that the working class must trail along behind the bourgeoisie.

But by negating the Marxist conception of the revolution, the resolution ends up with a curious idea of the nature of socialist revolution itself. On one issue after another, it actually downplays the internal class contradictions and explains everything by reference to the role of foreign imperialism. And it says that when the proletariat leads the "national-democratic liberation struggle" to victory, this is a "victory which, in essence, regardless of form, thus would be of a socialist character".

Behind many of the problems of the resolution stands its general method of approach. It doesn't seem to recognize the need for concrete analysis of the class situations in different countries. Instead it bases itself on general phrases, such as that this is the era of imperialism, or about isolation from the world market, or about "national independence lead(ing) nowhere...if it is confined to one country."

The resolution puts forward these ideas, in bits and pieces and never adds them up. But we will try to put them together and extract some general themes that lie behind them.

"Classical competitive capitalism" has become an impossibility?

The resolution stresses that "Imperialism's character as a world-wide system also means that classical competitive capitalism has become an impossibility." Indeed, most of the strong capitalist countries—Western Europe, Japan, U.S., etc.—are today state-capitalist, mixed economies. Western state-capitalism is not the same as what might be called "bureaucratic state-capitalism," which is now in shambles in Eastern Europe and in crisis in the Soviet Union. The state doesn't have nearly as large a role, and

the state bureaucrats and the bourgeoisie are not identical. But it is still state monopoly capitalism.)

But the resolution isn't just discussing the changes in capitalism from the 19th to 20th century. When it says that "classical competitive capitalism" has become an impossibility, it means that the oppressed countries cannot develop Western-style capitalism, but must remain dependent on imperialism.

This is an absurd proposition, which only has credibility because it mechanically combines an assertion about whether capitalism can develop in these countries with whether they will become independent of imperialism and develop 19th century-style capitalism.

In fact, most of the oppressed countries are in one stage or another of transition towards Western-style capitalism, or are already there. The countries usually remain backward. The masses are suffering. And the chains of imperialism remain. But how does that prove that this isn't Western-style capitalism or "classical competitive capitalism", in so far as this exists anywhere in the world? Was old-style capitalism a paradise? And were old-style capitalist countries free from the chains of the world market? Weren't there old-style capitalist countries that were enchained by other capitalist countries?

What is the local capitalism of the dependent countries?

The MLLS is for socialism, not capitalism, even if it be the most refined and sophisticated capitalism. But the way they argue about capitalist development in the dependent countries involves a glorified picture of what capitalism is.

The MLLS presumably wants to fight against the revisionist and opportunist conceptions that independent capitalism will liberate the oppressed countries. This conception paints a wonderful picture of what bourgeois development will do for these countries. The local capitalists will allegedly fight off the foreign imperialists, develop the economy independently, throw off the chains of imperialism, achieve a high level of economic development, etc. Some revisionists hold that the struggle for socialism should be put off until the bourgeoisie has accomplished all these marvels, while others believe that the national bourgeoisie will march into socialism hand-in-hand with the proletariat.

The MLLS opposes such opportunist conceptions. But the way it does this is by saying, in essence, that this is no longer possible in the era of imperialism. They imply that, yes, an independent bourgeois-democratic revolution is naturally carried out by "the national bourgeoisie," and it does achieve "classical competitive capitalism" and independence from imperialism. They seemed to grant this glorification of the bourgeoisie and capitalism. But they add: this is the era of imperialism, and so all this is no longer possible.

But capitalism is possible, and it exists in the oppressed countries. Most all of these countries have achieved

politically independent governments. They have their own ruling classes, rather than bureaucrats appointed from the imperialist metropolis. This has involved tremendous changes in the conditions of struggle. It has meant the growth of the indigenous ruling class. It has tremendously intensified all the internal class contradictions of these societies. And it has brought the socialist revolution that much nearer. It has done all this although it has left these countries shackled to and bullied by imperialism. To understand the effects of these changes on the revolutionary movement in these countries, one has to take this development of capitalism into account, and not theorize that capitalist development is impossible in these countries.

What about the internal class struggle?

Indeed, one feature of the resolution is that it tends to obliterate the internal class struggle in some of its explanations of events.

For example, why did revisionist state-capitalism go into crisis? The answer given is their isolation from the world market. Why, "the splendid isolation from the world market...was soon to become a drag on the development of the productive forces, and has in all these cases led to stagnation and decay." Instead of dealing with how the sidetracking of the revolution and the development of new class antagonisms in these countries, the answer is just the external factor. (This is aside from the question of whether this is a correct view of the external factor.)

And what about the stand of the national bourgeoisie? The resolution says that the national-bourgeoisie tends toward "national-reformism". They don't explain this as stemming from its fear of the local toilers, or from its role as an exploiter. No, it only states that "their base is in the point of support of imperialism (complementary industries, infra-structure etc.)."

Or again, the resolution holds that the proletariat should take the lead of the national-democratic revolution. Fine, but what reason does it give for this? This is explained first of all by the alleged impossibility of any independent capitalism in the era of imperialism. And secondly, by the fact that "national independence leads nowhere, cannot be firmly upheld, if it is confined to one country" (???) The question of the internal class development in these countries is not dealt with. The resolution bases its stand on these general arguments about world imperialism, and quite shaky arguments at that. For example, both the national-bourgeoisie and, until recently anyway, the advocates of revisionist state-capitalism could justly claim that their systems aren't restricted to a single country, but exist in world groupings of countries. There are economic groupings of such countries, such as COMECON for the pro-Soviet revisionist regimes and OPEC for oil countries ruled by the local bourgeoisie, as well as political and military groupings.

When the resolution discusses some of the great revolutionary movements of the twentieth century, it gives a class

characterization, but it is just a simple formula which actually negates the role of the various classes. It says that the Chinese revolution and other struggles was accomplished by the "petty-bourgeois intelligentsia" which "organized a victorious guerrilla war with a broad, although passive, mass support." Whatever devastating setbacks occurred in the large cities during the Chinese revolution, it is incredible that the massive uprising of the toilers in the countryside can be described simply as a passive sympathy. And it is astonishing that the resolution regards that it is the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, as a strata standing in its own right, that has been responsible for the world-shaking anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles. It is also hard to see how this corresponds with the resolution's view that this has been the "epoch of imperialism and the proletarian revolution."

What is a socialist revolution?

The resolution not only tends to leave aside the internal class relations in the oppressed countries, it also ends up rather vague on what it means by the socialist revolution there.

First, let's note that the resolution says that the immediate task is socialist revolution in all these countries, without exception. It states that "the order of the day in the entire world" (emphasis in the original) is for a revolution to "establish the dictatorship of the proletariat". Elsewhere in the resolution it spells out that "even in the most oppressed and undeveloped countries" the revolutionary victory it calls for would be "in essence, ... of a socialist character".

Thus the socialist revolution is to take place regardless of the stage of development of the country. We, on the contrary, think that, in different countries, the revolution may be at different stages, such as the straightforward national liberation movement, the democratic revolution, and the socialist revolution. (See, for example, our Second Congress resolution IV.J. on the struggle in the oppressed and dependent countries in the *Workers Advocate* of Jan. 1, 1984). But the MLLS believes that, with the arrival of the era of imperialism, only the socialist revolution is left.

But what then are the tasks of this "national-democratic struggle" that make it into a socialist revolution?

In its Programmatic Statement the MLLS talks of establishing "workers' states". But with regard to the oppressed countries, it talks of the "workers' and peasants' state. They don't explain how this affects their conception of socialism.

And does the MLLS think that this revolution should immediately establish the socialist economic system?

But in its Programmatic Statement (reprinted in the Jan. issue of the *Supplement*) the MLLS says that "Socialism can not be achieved within a single country, and therefore isolated workers' states are not able to survive in the long run, unless the revolution is spread out across the borders." This means that the revolution cannot achieve socialism

immediately, and it leaves undefined what the workers' state does until it is able to establish socialism in the world workers' republic. (The resolution leaves open how widely it thinks the revolution would have to spread to allow the establishment of socialism. But since no single country suffices, despite the fact that a few are the size of a continent, presumably it thinks the revolution must first spread over most of the world.) Thus presumably it hardly thinks that the "most undeveloped countries" could establish socialism.

So if they don't establish socialism, what do they establish and why do they call it socialism?

The Marxist analysis of the stages in the revolutionary process is a spur to socialism

If the proletariat rallies the other toilers around it and takes the lead in a "national-democratic liberation struggle" this would insure the struggle's widest, and most radical sweep. It would be the fastest way to establish the basis for transformation to the socialist stage of the revolution. But it would not in itself ensure that the revolution is socialist.

The Marxist analysis of the stages in the revolution is not some bitter medicine that the proletariat must swallow. It does not hold the proletariat back from revolution, and its purpose is not to scold the proletariat for deepening the revolution too far when it is only a "bourgeois-democratic" revolution. Yet the resolution's only reference to the theory of stages in the revolution is the assertion that "Any special stages, in which the workers have to abstain from their class independence in favor of some 'popular front' policy in alliance with 'their' national bourgeoisie, is thus out of the question." But right from the start Marxism set forward a revolutionary policy for the working class with respect to democratic revolutions that aren't yet socialist revolution. Marx and Engels wrote about this. And Lenin, in the era of imperialism, wrote about it in "Two Tactics of Social-democracy in the Democratic Revolution" and elsewhere.

Indeed, the Marxist analysis of stages in the revolution shows what constitutes a profound assault on capitalism, and what constitutes the preliminaries. By doing so, it shows what the proletariat must actually do to establish socialism. It serves as an antidote to that revolutionary euphoria that makes even a democratic revolution look like the end of all exploitation. And it thus spurs on consideration of what must be done to continue on to socialism, rather than to simply label national independence or democratic reforms as socialism.

True, the Marxist analysis of revolution does not provide a magic potion that allows the proletariat to disregard the stage of development of a country and of the revolutionary masses. The fact that the most advanced revolutionaries know that only the communist society eliminates exploitation doesn't suffice to create the conditions for communist revolution. The world has to go through a *series* of painful developments, and even the class-conscious proletariat has

to transform itself in the process of revolutionary struggle. Socialism can only be brought by the class struggle, but this class struggle can be cramped and overshadowed by an oppression that weighs on all society, and it takes more than a verbal slight of hand to resolve this issue.

The danger in simply labeling the "national-democratic liberation" revolution as socialist is, among other things, that this will weaken the consciousness of the specific tasks needed to bring socialism. The MLLS seems to believe that by declaring that there can be no stages in the revolution is a safeguard from opportunist conceptions. But in fact this labeling of the revolution, no matter what its form, as socialist in itself, has been used by various trends and regimes for to forestall the class struggle and the actual socialist revolution.

The variety of conditions among the oppressed peoples

The MLLS believes that it is opportunism to recognize anything but socialist revolution in the era of imperialism. But when life is thrown out the door, it may come back through the window. Thus the resolution talks of the "national-democratic liberation" struggle of a "socialist character", a formula which is apparently flexible enough to slur over whether there is a national liberation struggle, or a democratic revolution of some sort, or some other type of liberation struggle. The variety that is apparently thrown out in favor of a uniform socialist revolution is now resurrected, but the framework for dealing with this variety is crushed since it is all "socialism."

Thus the resolution's framework actually dulls the consciousness of the differing concrete issues that must be faced in the various countries. There are some peoples who are still denied all national rights (Palestinians, the black masses of South Africa) and others who face their own national exploiters as the ruling class. There are hangman regimes, reformist regimes, and regimes which have resulted from revolutions or dramatic changes. There are situations where a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist force confronts the reformist-led movements, and situations which the reformist-led movement is the most militant of the organized forces.

This variety is lost to the resolution, which is scared of "special stages" in the revolution. Of course, it might be said that the "only" thing that prevents the proletariat from carrying out a socialist revolution is its lack of strength. But aren't there objective factors that help determine the strength of the proletariat?

The degree of economic development helps determine how many workers there are and how central their role is for the society as a whole. It requires a high degree of development to have a large number of industrial workers in large-scale production. Of course, there is also the possibility that a country has a numerous proletariat, but one that is scattered as artisans and craftsmen in small

urban shops, or concentrated in labor gangs in large plantations in the countryside, or scattered throughout the countryside by employment at a multitude of small farms. Such conditions definitely play a role in the consciousness of such workers, their capacity for struggle, and what they look to as the goal of the struggle.

Among the conditions that determine the strength and consciousness of the workers is the history and result of past struggles. And also the political conditions. Whether there are national rights for example, helps determine whether the workers feel trampled upon in common with other classes, or whether the class struggle stands out in full clarity.

These factors also affect the other toilers, thus helping to determine how likely it is that they will join in the revolutionary onslaught on the old regime, and what type of economic reorganization they will take part in after a revolutionary victory.

Only by considering such questions can one determine the stage of revolution, and within the stage of revolution, the methods of carrying it out. They determine whether the proletariat has the possibility to establish its leadership in the "national-democratic liberation" struggle. And if it can establish its leadership, whether it can extend that leadership right through to the construction of socialism, and not just the carrying out of the most radical democratic revolution.

Leninism or trotskyism?

The founding documents of the MLLS speak of having gained more clarity, through study and discussion, as one of the reasons for its founding. But one of the problems that is preventing them from dealing with problems from the past is that they have adopted a number of theses from the Tony Cliff and the "IS tendency". For example, with respect to the struggle in the oppressed countries, they reprinted Cliff's pamphlet *Deflected Permanent Revolution* and held that it went further in the struggle against the three worlds theory than the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists had.

This influence of Cliff's trotskyism has led them off on a tangent.

We have already remarked about the trotskyist use of the formula of "political, not military" support. The deprecation of the earlier revolutions in the oppressed countries and the view that "petty-bourgeois intelligentsia" was their motor is also developed by Tony Cliff.

The tendency to overlook the internal class relations in the oppressed countries appears related to Cliff's approach. He discusses the state power in these countries as something that "reflects not only, or even mainly, the national economic base on which it rises".

The negation of the Marxist-Leninist theory on the stages of revolution also is related to Cliff's pamphlet, which upholds Trotsky against Lenin in the name of permanent revolution.

Furthermore, Cliff's pamphlet is notable for its lack of interest in the different situations facing the toilers in different countries, or in the experience of the revolutionary movements. Cliff reduces all this to short, simple formulas, supposedly good just about anywhere in the world, such as that the past revolutions were all due to the "petty-bourgeois intelligentsia". Unfortunately, the resolution of the MLLS shares this same tendency to answer complex questions with a few simple formulas, such as this is the era of imperialism.

The MLLS has tried to combine Cliff's influence with their revolutionary instincts, but this has let them into contradictions. And it has led them away from a serious study of the Marxist-Leninist theory. The resolution's viewpoint would tend to lead one to discard Marx's views as from the pre-imperialist era, the bad old days when a special stage of bourgeois-democratic revolution was

possible. And it directly goes against the Leninist views on revolution in the oppressed countries.

As far as we know, the MLLS has not directly expressed any stand concerning Cliff's admitted opposition to various Leninist views, despite the content of the pamphlet they reprinted from him. (We can not read Swedish, but only the English translations from **Red Dawn**.) It has not come to grips with the fact that Cliff's theorizing and Leninism are incompatible, or tried to explain how it thinks they can be combined. Also, while **Red Dawn** has defended Cliff's views on certain questions, it doesn't seem to have openly discussed the fact of Cliff's trotskyism.

Sooner or later, the MLLS will have to openly confront these issues concerning the stand towards Leninism. Only overcoming the pat, anti-Marxist formulas from Cliff will allow them to continue serious theoretical work. ■

University of California against the homeless

The following articles are from vol. 2, #2 of Bay Area Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-San Francisco Bay Area.

UC Berkeley administrators publicly unveiled the latest "clean up" plan for People's Park on January 23rd. They've resurrected the university-city-run "Save Our Southside" campaign to harass and kick out black youths and the homeless. The university issued a draft letter with orders to discard belongings (referred to as "garbage") of homeless people, cite or arrest homeless who might beg for money and to nightly send police in to kick the homeless out of People's Park.

This is the kind of big-hearted response UC and the city of Berkeley have for the homeless, whose numbers have multiplied in the aftermath of the October 17 earthquake. Far from any real solution to the problems of homelessness and unemployment, the city of Berkeley and the university are joining hands to increase harassment of the homeless and destitute. This is the typical response of the ruling class to the problems of the poor and homeless. They don't want to admit that the system of capitalism itself is responsible for putting people out on the streets; they just want to hide the problem; sweep the homeless out of sight. ■

UC cops arrest pro-choice activists

On the evening of January 20th the UC Berkeley police arrested four women who were publicizing a pro-choice demonstration to take place the next day, the first day of the Spring semester. For the heinous "crime" of putting up

posters for a political demonstration, the police tried to slap charges of trespassing, vandalism and felony conspiracy.

The police held the women in Sproul Hall's notorious jail for several hours before booking them at Berkeley city jail and then set outrageously high bail of \$6,000. The police made no secret that this was an attempt to keep the women from attending the pro-choice rally at noon the next day; a sort of pre-emptive strike. What a way to begin the semester!

Setting an example against protests

In arresting the pro-choice activists, the cops wanted to make an example to discourage any other students from campus political protests.

The administration claims it never objects to political content when it harasses, intimidates or arrests activists for "rule violations". Oh no, they are just enforcing the rules that allegedly serve everybody's interests.

These rules were dusted off and refined when the anti-apartheid movement came up, as part of a strategy to discipline students for political activity without spending expensive hours in courts.

In the wake of the huge anti-apartheid demonstrations of '85-'86, student disciplinary procedures, intimidation and bureaucratic harassment have been used more frequently to stop political protests against the university.

A movement must be built that can withstand the abuse, harassment and deception of UC. The arrests of pro-choice activists and all the attacks on the student movement cannot go unchallenged.

Drop the charges against the pro-choice women! ■

The CPUSA and the unemployed movement of the 1930's

Continued from the front page

unemployment was highest in the older industries such as mining, steel, textile, and garments.

The 20's were also a decade like the 80's where the union hacks wouldn't lift a finger to defend the workers. The American Federation of Labor refused to organize the workers in the mass production industries, the overwhelming majority of the workers. It sold the workers out left and right under the policy of business unionism and concessions. It made a mockery of trade union democracy and threw communists and militant workers out of unions, even where they had won the majority. It scorned the plight of the unemployed and even opposed assistance for them or unemployment insurance on the grounds that this would encourage laziness. Meanwhile the Socialist Party paid lip service to unemployment insurance but supported the rationalization drive and talked of the glories of American capitalism which had supposedly overcome crises.

Despite the relatively high unemployment rate of 10 per cent or better, there was no movement among the unemployed during the 1920's and the CPUSA's few attempts to launch unemployed councils were unsuccessful. Although unemployment was high, workers still tended to believe the capitalist propaganda that it was a temporary phenomenon and that private charities and families would take care of the unemployed. But this did not mean that unemployment had no effect on the workers. The insecurity of life was a big weapon in the hands of the capitalists to drive down wages and to enforce speed up. And speed up reached a point where millions of workers were debilitated long before they reached the normal end of their working lives.

Toward the end of the 20's, despite all obstacles, a struggle to get organized and oppose rationalization began to develop in the older basic industries—mining, textile, and garment.

In this situation the Communist International called on the CPUSA to come forward as the leader of the rank-and-file workers against the capitalist offensive of rationalization and unemployment. It called on the party to boldly organize the unorganized instead of waiting for the AFL to do so, and to lead strikes against rationalization and wage cutting. It put forward the demand for a seven hour day and unemployment insurance to unite the employed and unemployed and take the lever of unemployment away from the capitalists. And it called for organizing the unemployed into unemployed councils to fight for immediate relief.

The CPUSA did take up this policy, and it sought to root itself in the big factories, mills, and mines. It led a number of militant strikes and organized tens of thousands of workers into the TUUL unions through these battles. (1) The CP was a leading force in the miners strikes and in the New Bedford, Passaic and other textile strikes. It

carried out a lot of agitation for the unemployment insurance and shorter working hours, although it was unable at this time to actually organize unemployed councils. And the CP and the TUUL unions continued the struggle to organize basic units on a factory rather than an area basis.

At the same time, this progress shouldn't be overstated. The situation varied from city to city but some sources say that only about 10 percent of the party membership were in what it called "shop nuclei". (2) The percentage of party members belonging to unions including TUUL unions was also low. The CP had inherited from its left social-democratic origin the tradition of a loose and relatively inactive base. And the CP was having a difficult time learning to build organization at the base. Many struggles were led by sending in skilled, big-name, national party leaders or TUUL leaders. A lot of good revolutionary work would be done but they usually failed to build up the local units in the process. In the CP's discussion journal there is little consideration of how to build units in the factories, and none of it is a deep or systematic summation of experience—it is mostly harangues that it should be done.

Nevertheless an orientation was being developed of struggle, of taking the party seriously as the leader of the class. The CP was making deep inroads in the basic industries. Then the crisis hit.

The crisis hits

In a matter of months millions of workers who had enjoyed relatively stable employment for years were thrown out of work. And every month things got worse. The factory workers were decimated. Not only were the workers' numbers decimated, but those who remained at their jobs were so taken aback by the layoffs and the employer terror that despite constant wage cuts there was almost no motion. The movement of the employed workers that had begun to build during the late 20's was broken up. The party units were wiped out at most factories and over half the party was unemployed. And in industrial cities the figure was more like 80 per cent unemployment among party members.

During the twenties even though unemployment was high, it was often more temporary and affected a much smaller section of the class. But after 1929, unemployment affected everyone. Half of the class was unemployed and many of the employed were working only one or two days a week under the Hooverite stagger or share the misery program. Wages were sharply reduced, and a worker did not know from day to day whether he or she would have a job. For the unemployed, there were no benefits. Starvation and homelessness was the order of the day. Millions wandered from city to city homeless and looking for work.

The only source of food for millions was the meager rations of the humiliating bread lines. The unemployed were desperate.

What was going on in the U.S. was going on all over the world to a greater or lesser extent. In this situation the CI called on the parties to seize upon the question of unemployment as the key issue, to organize the struggles of the unemployed for their immediate needs, to strive to organize actions among the employed workers in defense of the unemployed, and to use the bold actions of the unemployed to revolutionize the employed.

Nowhere in the industrial world was the situation of the unemployed more desperate than in the US. There was no unemployment insurance. The government refused to provide relief and the unemployed were at the mercy of the soup kitchens, of the private charities and the Salvation Army. As late as 1933, even after the party had won great improvements in relief, Detroit General Hospital reported four deaths per day by starvation.

They were angry

Not only were the unemployed miserable and desperate, but in many cities they were the majority and they were angry. No one could say now that unemployment was just a temporary phenomenon affecting an unfortunate and lazy few any more. The situation among the masses was such that huge movements and demonstrations could be organized in a matter of days. To give you an example: in Flint, Michigan the entire local party organization was arrested a week before the March 6, 1930 demonstration. No one was left to represent the party or lead the demonstration, and yet 15,000 workers lined the streets waiting for the march to begin.

One ex-CP'er tells in his biography of a young comrade who was sent to organize in Altoona, Pennsylvania. He arrived by bus and didn't know a soul. He walked across the street from the bus station and began talking and agitating with the unemployed workers hanging out in the park. One worker invited him to stay the night at his home. That night the two of them got together this worker's friends and neighbors and held the first meeting of the Altoona unemployed committee.

The CPUSA as champion of the unemployed

In this situation it was the CPUSA that stepped forward boldly as the leader of the unemployed. The AFL called on the employed workers to accept wage cuts and part-time work, and continued to oppose any unemployment insurance. The Socialist Party carried out educational activities about the benefits of unemployment insurance. Right up to the day of the great crash, the SP had been praising the stability of American capitalism, and now the liberals and the SP simply bemoaned the plight of the unemployed. But the CP had not only warned of the crash six months in

advance, but it immediately went into action to organize the mass struggle of the unemployed.

During the winter of 1929-1930 the CP organized a nation-wide campaign of local demonstrations demanding immediate relief for the unemployed and national unemployment insurance. The CP and TUUL organizers held hundreds, if not thousands of street corner rallies to mobilize the masses to fight for relief, and distributed thousands of leaflets. They organized demonstrations, protests, and confrontations with relief authorities to demand relief and increases in relief. They began organizing fights to stop evictions. This agitation fell on the receptive ears of millions of workers who had just had the rug pulled out from under them and who were very angry.

March 6, 1930 saw an international day of unemployed demonstrations called by the CI. The CP brought over a million workers into the streets in cities across the U.S. under the CP banners of "Fight, Don't Starve, Work or Wages," demanding relief and unemployment insurance at

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the expense of the employers and the government. And again on May Day another one-half million marched in the CP unemployed demonstrations. Many of these demonstrations were viciously attacked by the police and pitched battles were fought. It is to the great credit of the CPUSA that it resolutely stepped forward to organize the unemployed masses. The heroism of the communist comrades in those days is an inspiration even to this day.

These demonstrations set the CP up as the leader of the unemployed movement, which at the time was a relatively uncontested field. And after such successes there was a certain tendency among some sections of the CP to think that the unemployed could be organized simply by calling demonstrations on general slogans such as "Fight, Don't Starve" and demanding unemployment insurance. But the CP and the CI pointed out, and experience proved, that to build the mass movement and organization among the masses there also had to be sustained struggles around the immediate needs of the masses. Over the next few years the CP, and the unemployed committees and councils organized by it, organized tens of thousands of battles to force state and local governments to provide relief for the unemployed, to stop evictions, to force the government to provide milk for the children of the unemployed, to stop police terror against the unemployed, and so on.

The Unemployed Councils

The basic form for organizing the unemployed movement was the establishment of unemployed committees primarily in the neighborhoods but also in the unions, the fraternal organizations, at the soup kitchens, etc., to fight for the various immediate demands of the unemployed. The idea was for the party units and the TUUL to take the lead in forming these committees, but the committees were not officially affiliated with either the CP or the TUUL. The committees were to be open to all unemployed and employed workers in the area, union, flop house, etc., regardless of party affiliation, and the leading body was to be elected by the workers involved. The unemployed committees in a city or district were to send delegates to a citywide or district unemployed council which would direct the overall movement in the area.

Initially there were no plans for a national organization. Calls for the major national demonstrations and campaigns were issued through the CP and the TUUL, and the local unemployed councils were mobilized on an individual basis to participate in these campaigns. At some point a national leadership of the Unemployed Councils was established. Still, from the descriptions of the work of the unemployed councils, it seems that this leadership worked more through the Party than directly with the local unemployed councils.

Thus the first documents on forming unemployed councils did not call for the unemployed councils to be affiliated to the TUUL. The TUUL was to take the lead in launching the councils and committees as organizations of a broad united front from below, open to all workers

and unemployed regardless of party or trade union affiliation. But in 1929 the TUUL gave a call for the affiliation of the unemployed Councils to the TUUL, and a similar policy was also followed in Germany. It was criticized by the RILU (Red International of Labor Unions) in early 1931 as sectarian and restrictive. This criticism, at least for the CPUSA, may have been correct in that huge numbers of workers were becoming involved in the movement for the first time and their participation shouldn't be restricted by the demand to accept the principles of the TUUL. However, the practical effect of correcting this error on drawing new masses into the unemployed councils was more limited than the RILU leaders suggested. Everyone knew that the CP and TUUL were organizing the Unemployed Councils, and you could not draw in significantly more unemployed with a formal change from TUUL affiliation to non-affiliation.

Scenes from the struggle

The work of building the unemployed movement in a city would generally be initiated by building a struggle to demand relief from the city government for the unemployed masses or to prevent cuts in that relief. The CP used some interesting tactics in building the movement.

For example, in the summer of '32 the city of St. Louis claimed it was running out of funds and planned to cut thousands of families off its emergency relief rolls. To build a movement to fight this, and to build up the CP and unemployed organizations among the mass of workers, the CP and fledgling unemployed councils called meetings in the neighborhoods and demanded that the mayor and city council members come and explain themselves. Only one or two did show up, but hundreds of workers came out and saw the CP expose them, and they participated in denouncing the bourgeois politicians. In this way the party helped the workers see the need for militant action. Then on July 8 the Party and the unemployed councils organized a demonstration five thousand-strong to march on city hall demanding the reinstatement of relief. The workers in the demonstration then elected a delegation to go in to speak with the mayor. Seeing the demonstration outside, the mayor promised food and a temporary relief allowance to those who had come to the demonstration and said that the city council would call a special meeting in three days to consider reinstating relief payments to the fifteen thousand families who had been cut off the rolls.

The day of the council meeting ten thousand workers showed up, and sent a delegation into the council meeting to represent them. But the police arrested the workers' delegation and fired on the crowd. A pitched battle ensued for several hours. Word spread quickly and the workers were angry. The bourgeoisie took fright and immediately reinstated all the families to the relief rolls. The CP and the unemployed councils distributed 50,000 leaflets on the events, and the CP called for a united front conference of mass organizations for July 24. William Z. Foster spoke to

a crowd of two thousand. CP influence grew, and unemployed councils were organized everywhere.

These kind of movements, struggles, and confrontations were organized by the Party and the unemployed councils in every major industrial city in the country.

In addition to battles to extend or establish relief, the unemployed committees would be extended by taking up the day-to-day fights of the unemployed against evictions, against individual families being denied relief, against police repression of the unemployed, for milk for children, and against cutting off of utilities. Such battles often reached quite large proportions. One battle over an eviction and a rent strike in New York involved over five hundred workers fighting the police with over two thousand sympathizers standing by.

In Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago evictions were effectively stopped for whole periods of time. One former CP'er reports in his autobiography that the Sheriff of Cuyahoga County [where Cleveland is located] was so worn down from mass battles over evictions that he approached the local Party leaders to make a deal. He would notify them when an eviction was to take place, and his deputies would move a couple pieces of furniture out into the street and then leave. Then the unemployed council could arrive and move the furniture back in. In this way, the sheriff could tell the courts that he had carried out their eviction orders, while the unemployed council could save the family's home, all without big fights and without moving a whole house of furniture twice.

Another frequently used form of struggle was to organize fifteen or twenty unemployed workers to go down to the relief offices to confront the officials over denial of relief to an individual unemployed worker. In fact, once some relief for the masses had been won, this kind of thing was often a major activity of the unemployed committees. In the early years even this type of action often led to major confrontations and mass mobilizations.

Links with the employed workers

The CI and CP literature emphasized the need to draw the employed workers into the movement in defense of the unemployed, and called for using the movement of the unemployed to revolutionize and gain ties with the employed workers in the basic industries. The CP paid considerable attention to this question. In nearly all strikes in areas where the party was active, unemployed councils were mobilized to help the strikers man picket lines, stop scabs, and obtain relief.

In the early thirties, of course, there were few strikes, but it was during this period that the party achieved one of its biggest successes in uniting the employed and unemployed workers. During the anthracite miners strike in 1931, the party organized unemployed councils in the area and mobilized the unemployed workers to picket, shut down, and smash up the scab recruiting agencies. Then strikers and the unemployed organized a huge march of

thirty thousand miners and unemployed that raised the demands of both.

In another case, in 1933 the unemployed council in Greensburg, Pennsylvania decided to organize the workers in a local sweatshop into a union. So they got a large crowd of unemployed workers together, marched down to the factory, drew the workers out on strike, and won the strike.

But usually, in the early thirties, due to massive layoffs and the reign of terror in the factories, there was little activity in the factories and therefore the ties were built at a lower level. In the industrial areas, the Party concentrated its work of building the unemployed councils in those neighborhoods where lived workers from the factories they were interested in. During the Hunger March campaigns of 1931 and 1932, and during other local campaigns, the Party organized unemployed marches to the gates of major factories demanding that the capitalists provide relief for their laid off workers. In other cases, the march was against pending layoffs.

Also leaflets were distributed and collections were taken up inside factories and at the factory gates to help finance the activities and hunger marches of the unemployed and to mobilize the employed to support them. And, as we shall see later on, during 1933 and 1934 the CPUSA carried out a major campaign in the AFL unions to have the workers support the workers' unemployment insurance bill, which the AFL bureaucracy was opposing.

In a few strikes, the Party was able to get the workers to raise, along with their own demands, the demands of the unemployed who had supported them. But the activity of the employed on behalf of the unemployed generally did not reach the level of the activity of the unemployed in support of strikes. A good deal of the difficulty in developing mass action in support of the unemployed was due to the influence of the AFL labor bureaucrats, including "left" bureaucrats, in narrowing the scope and militancy of the strike movement. Opportunism was much more entrenched in the unions than in the movement of the unemployed.

The part-time workers

During the Depression a major link between the employed and unemployed workers were the part-time workers. This was especially true in the steel industry where the vast majority of workers were working part-time, one or two days a month—or, if they were lucky, one or two days a week. The part-time workers could not live on their wages, so the questions of relief, fighting evictions, and so on were of major importance to them. One of the tactics used by the party and the revolutionary unions for organizing the factories was to launch the unemployed struggle and thereby develop contacts among the part-time workers who were drawn into the fight. As well, inside the factories the demand for relief assistance from the employer for part-time workers was frequently given precedence

in organizing the economic struggle.

The councils weren't stable and lasting

The CP developed quite a reputation as the militant leader of the unemployed and its unemployed councils were widely respected. But there was a problem in building the unemployed councils as stable mass organizations. The struggle itself of the unemployed went through certain phases, and this was also reflected in the councils.

Frequently the work among the unemployed in a city would begin around the demand that the authorities, or the biggest local capitalist in company towns, provide relief for the unemployed. Big meetings and rallies would be organized to mobilize the masses; bourgeois politicians would be invited to explain themselves and would be exposed and denounced; a big demonstration would be called; there would be confrontations with the police—maybe even the city hall would be stormed or occupied. In the end the government would come up with money for some kind of relief system, at least for a good section of the unemployed. By 1932 this struggle had forced some kind of government-paid relief system in all the major industrial cities. Once such a system was established the size of the movement would drop off. But there would still be battles of considerable size over the repeated attempts to cut relief payments and over evictions. The struggles against evictions are probably the most well-known feature of the unemployed councils in the 30's, and they frequently did involve hundreds, if not thousands, of workers.

In the course of these struggles, the party and TUUL activists would call mass meetings of the workers in the district on the issues that were agitating them and around which struggles were being organized. They would discuss the issues and propose the formation of an unemployed committee. The workers would elect a committee. Hundreds of workers would come to weekly meetings for a few weeks and participate in the struggle. There would be a lot of excitement for awhile. But after the most pressing demands had been won or lost, participation in the unemployed committee meetings would drop off. The movement would not develop to a higher level. The workers would stop coming en masse to the meetings, and the committees would end up consisting of the active core of the CPUSA and TUUL activists and the new people they had drawn around themselves in the course of the struggle. This core would continue to organize smaller-scale actions around evictions or the grievances of individual families denied relief. They would have varying success in drawing the wider masses into hunger marches and other campaigns. If some other big issue came up, the meetings would grow again. Frequently, however, the unemployed committees would become inactive after about six months to a year.

Was this due mainly to the CPUSA's method of work?

The CI and the CP leadership spoke often about this problem. Most frequently they asserted in their articles that the primary cause of this problem was a bureaucratic approach on the part of the party bodies at the base and of the higher party bodies that led them. They said that the party comrades would decide everything that the unemployed council were to do, rather than go through the trouble of holding a meeting and consulting the non-party activists and letting the committee decide. They attributed these errors to the ideological weakness of the party base and a fear among local leaders of unleashing a broad movement that they would not have the forces to control.

The CI did acknowledge another issue other than that of CPUSA's methods. It pointed out that there would be a tendency for the stagnation and disintegration of the unemployed movement if it failed to link up with the employed workers movement. In the US such a merger was achieved only occasionally. But even this was blamed on lack of effort by the local party organizations.

The CPUSA's weaknesses were indeed a problem. But there were also other factors involved in what happened to the unemployed councils. If these factors are not given sufficient weight, then the criticism and self-criticism of internal weaknesses can end up as burning pressure to achieve breakthroughs no matter what the conditions and methods. But we will come back to the question of the objective factors in a moment.

CPUSA's internal weaknesses

Correctly leading broad mass organizations requires considerable skill and ideological clarity. The CPUSA was ideologically weak in general, and particularly at the base. And the bureaucratic leadership was not simply at the base. For example, almost nowhere in the Party Organizer or other journals do you find a concrete summation of the work of building the party organization in the midst of organizing the unemployed. Almost nowhere do you find an attempt to explain how the party leads the non-party masses, how it deals with backward and confused ideas and currents among the masses, etc.

Instead the question of correct leadership is generally reduced to the question of making sure the committee is elected by the workers, that it forms youth commissions, women's commissions, agit-prop commissions, etc. and that the workers are drawn into the work of these commissions. Although there is a kernel of truth in these points—the idea of encouraging the participation of the masses—this approach presented an overelaborate ideal without making an analysis of the actual forms that had come into being and how to move them forward step by step. We did however find a quite concrete criticism of the party's role in leading the unemployed committees that seemed very

much to the point, which was made in Party literature repeatedly by Herbert Benjamin and Israel Amter—that party organizers in the unemployed committees were frequently removed and replaced without consulting the activists or members of the unemployed committee.

Organizationally the CPUSA, at the beginning of the Depression, still had the problem of activating the majority of its members, and it had an active section who tended to be good organizers as individuals. The internal life at the base suffered from up-in-the-air debates detached from analyzing the tasks-at-hand, and bureaucratic assignments of tasks with almost no check-up. This is actually not unlike the situation facing revolutionary collectives which came up in the mass upsurge of the 60's and 70's.

The Depression placed enormous external tasks before CPUSA. To its credit, the CPUSA rose to shoulder those tasks. In addition the party faced enormous, almost hysterical, pressure from the CI for breakthroughs in developing organized mass influence and in recruitment of party members. In this situation the work of building up the party organization at the base tended to get short-circuited.

There were of course some advances. The *Daily Worker* improved in its coverage and commentary on the work of the party in the local areas. The *Party Organizer* began coming out to discuss the work at the base. During the National Hunger March Campaigns of 1931 and '32 there was an attempt to organize discussion at the base on the question of tactics in the unemployed movement, and the more backward areas and units were brought into the struggle. But overall organizational attention to the base lagged, and there were numerous mea culpas "I am to blame" about this in party literature.

There was a tendency when an important struggle was coming up to send in a talented organizer from the district or the national leadership who would give tactical direction to the struggle. Big successes would be achieved. But the tendency was not to use these struggles to consolidate and train the existing units.

For example in the Spring of 1933 the Detroit District organized a big campaign among the unemployed in Dearborn. This work was put in the hands of a talented district organizer. Broad sections of the workers in Dearborn, and to some extent in Detroit, were brought into this campaign, which was directed against Ford and culminated with a second hunger march to the Ford plant to demand relief. Some brilliant tactics were used. But in summing up the work the organizer admits a lot of direct party work was neglected. For example the unit at Ford did not, during the campaign, come out with a single *Ford Worker*. Considering that one of the main reasons for targeting Ford was to build up Party and union organization among the Ford workers, this mistake reflects a real blindness to building up local Party bodies and learning to organize the mass campaigns through them.

Another example of this weakness appears in a report on organizing an unemployed council in a small steel town in Southern Ohio. This town had had a number of party

members for years; mass meetings and other activities had been carried out; but it had failed to stir the local workers. The district sent an organizer to the town to organize the unemployed. The local comrades were initially skeptical, but soon, with the help of non-party workers, the party had organized a massive movement. Hundreds of workers were attending meetings. The organizer then reports that the party faced a problem of how to lead the unemployed committee since no party members had been elected to the executive committee. He says the party had no forces locally to lead the committee, so the district solved the problem by maintaining close consultation with the non-party workers who had been elected to the leadership of the committee. But what of the local unit? Nothing is mentioned. It seems, rather, that building this unit and its direct work among the rank-and-file masses was overlooked as a way of exerting party influence among the masses. It is of course possible that the whole local unit turned out to be hopeless, but then again nothing like this is said about the unit. It appears to be another case of overlooking the work of local party-building.

Objective factors influencing the councils

The Party's weakness at the base made bureaucratic methods inevitable to a certain extent. Certainly this weakness made it difficult to handle the complicated question of leading the mass organizations correctly and may have been a factor in the transient nature of unemployed organizations. But there were other objective factors that contributed to the problem, and these were underestimated by both the CI and CP leadership. This underestimation, in turn, was a factor turning party self-criticism into unrealistic pressure to accomplish miracles.

What were some of these objective factors?

A) The lives of the unemployed were precarious and disorganized, and this made building stable organization quite difficult. The unemployed were forced to move frequently, suffered constant family crises, etc.

B) In addition many workers oscillated between unemployment and full or part-time jobs. And frequently the most active elements in the unemployed committees and councils were those most likely to succeed in finding work. This turnover constantly disrupted the core of the unemployed committees.

C) The majority of American workers at the time had little experience in class organization, even in reformist unions. So their consciousness of the necessity of organization was weak. Indeed the very experience the workers gained in the unemployed committees was an important

training for the work of building unions a few years later.

D) There were still considerable illusions that things would get better eventually. So once some basic relief was won, there was a certain tendency to just wait for better times. Of course, when the bourgeoisie tried to take away what had already been won, which they did about once or twice a year, the masses would again be driven into motion for a time.

E) There is a strong tendency of an unemployed movement to plateau and stagnate unless it can link up with the movement of the employed workers, form a class-wide fight, and broaden its perspectives. Otherwise the tendency is for the unemployed committees to be limited to local grievance committees, and for the movement to dissipate. But such a link up was quite difficult in the early thirties because there wasn't much of an employed workers' movement to speak of. Up to 1933 there was such devastation of the workers, and such a reign of terror in the factories, that the movement was quite low.

F) There was the influence of bourgeois and reformist trends. In the beginning the field was relatively wide open for the Communist Party. But by 1932 and 1933 the Party, while still the largest and strongest political force among the unemployed, faces growing competition from the Mustelites, the Socialist Party, and the bourgeois politicians. (3) The bourgeois demagogues and the opportunist-led unemployed organizations promised the unemployed that there was an easier path to obtain some relief and economic security than militant class struggle. Thus the masses would only become active in the Party-associated unemployed councils when there was a big crisis or the politicians and reformists had sufficiently exposed themselves. At all times the workers had tremendous respect for the CPUSA and the unemployed councils for the struggle they led and the battles they had won. Even the enemies of the CPUSA had to admit the existence of this respect. But it was inevitable that the masses would tend to float between the different trends until they learned by their experience the correctness of communist policy and leadership. I will go more into this in a later section.

Thus powerful objective factors worked against building the unemployed councils as large, highly-structured, long-

term mass organizations. The form that actually developed was a very loose mass organization with an active core-of communists and militant activists. The masses could flock into them at times of ferment and crisis, while a smaller core carried on the work with wide mass sympathy in between. This looks like it may have been the best form for the situation. (It can be noted that in every country the unemployed organizations only embraced a small percentage of consistently active unemployed, but the influence of these small organizations was very big.)

FDR Takes Office

The coming to power of the Roosevelt administration in early 1933 brought about major changes in the political situation, and affected the party's tactics in the unemployed movement and on other fronts.

Franklin D. Roosevelt took over in March of 1933 at the lowest point of the great depression. Over 17 million were unemployed. The banking system was about to collapse. The farm economy had collapsed. Discontent was spreading, with a strike wave beginning among the employed, farmers battling against mortgage foreclosures, and the unemployed a hotbed. Hoover's tactics of let them eat cake had not solved the economic crisis, and there was tremendous anger in the country.

In this situation, Roosevelt's administration marked a major change in the tactics of the bourgeoisie towards the economy, and towards the workers and unemployed. Unlike Hoover, FDR talked a lot of bull to present himself as the friend of the workers and unemployed, and he said he would help the forgotten man and throw out the money changers. He turned to corporate state programs, in particular the National Recovery Administration (NRA), to cut down competition among the big capitalists (these same money changers) and let them fix prices and wages among themselves. When major sections of the capitalists balked at his NRA boards as too much government interference, he organized huge demonstrations to pressure them to join. (Within a matter of months, NRA boards had been established in all major industries, as the capitalists saw that the wage and hour standards could be set quite low, ignored when necessary, or used as wage ceilings against workers' demands, while the price fixing was for real.)

At the same time, he promised the workers that the NRA would bring them higher wages and the right to form unions. The reformist leaders of the AFL were given some seats on the NRA's wage boards. Arbitration boards were set up to resolve disputes between employers and unions.

Through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the federal government bailed out the nearly bankrupt state and local governments by taking over most of the expense of providing the abysmally low relief payments. He began the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program which provided some unemployed youth with jobs reforesting the countryside—in camps run by the

army at very low wages. And he set up the Public Works Administration (PWA—which was distinct from the much larger WPA, which was started later) for public works. But the PWA projects took a long time to start, the PWA was never that large, and it included a good deal of military construction. (The aircraft carriers *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* were PWA projects.)

The initial impact of Roosevelt's programs was to create a lot of illusions among the masses that things would soon be better. But the actual course of events led to struggles. Roosevelt's promises of higher wages were not met. At the same time, while Roosevelt had tried to channel the workers' struggle for organization to the reformists, Roosevelt's capitalist class brothers didn't want any unions, and they sought to force the workers into company unions on a massive scale. So the struggle to form unions led to bloody and militant strikes over the next few years.

Roosevelt's promises to the unemployed initially tended to put a damper on the unemployed movement. But anger began to grow when, after a few months, unemployment again began to grow. In addition, the centralizing of relief in the hands of the federal government tended to concentrate the struggle. And Roosevelt had a penchant for workfare or work relief programs for a minority of the unemployed, instead of unemployment insurance or universal relief—in these programs, the relief recipients were required to work in return for semi-starvation payments which were, however, higher than the relief for those who stayed at home. These programs brought thousands and thousands of unemployed workers together on projects, and so made it easier to organize them than if they were isolated at home.

Every time the unemployed began to stir, Roosevelt would launch another work relief program for some more workers. At the same time he would try to cut back on direct relief. When he felt that the pressure of the unemployed had eased, he would cut back on the work relief programs as well. This giving with one hand and taking back with the other created crises of discontent among the unemployed.

CPUSA's Stand Toward FDR

The CP's initial stand towards Roosevelt and his NRA program was basically correct. The AFL hacks eagerly joined in the NRA, took positions on Industry Boards, and preached cooperation, mediation and arbitration of strikes. But the CPUSA pointed out that the Roosevelt program was to use the state to help the capitalists overcome the crisis at the expense of the masses and to give the masses the minimum of concessions possible. It called on the workers to defy the NRA standards on wages, to reject arbitration of their strikes, and to organize unions through the policy of militant class struggle.

The CP pointed to the corporate state features of Roosevelt's policy and characterized his regime as a step on the road to fascism. The CP may have overplayed the

issue of fascism even though its assessment there was a fascist danger was generally correct. And this was connected to a certain difficulty the CPUSA had dealing with illusions created by Roosevelt among the masses. Roosevelt did throw certain crumbs to the masses. He did express more sympathy for the plight of the masses (words about money changers are cheap). And this policy did create illusions among the masses and require one to be concrete and tactical in developing the criticism of the Roosevelt plan.

For example, the CPUSA characterized the CCC as a fascist forced labor program for the indoctrination of youth. And in fact the indoctrination part was true. But to the starving unemployed even such jobs—at one-third of the average wage, under army supervision, etc.—had appeal. The CCC could not be boycotted through denunciation, but those in it had to be dealt with as those on other programs were.

To give some example of the different atmosphere under Roosevelt than Hoover, consider a related example. In 1932 the Party had assumed leadership of the Veterans bonus march on Washington—and Hoover had called out the army to smash up the veterans encampment and drive them out of Washington. In 1933 the party led another veterans march on Washington, demanding a bonus for all unemployed veterans. This time Roosevelt had the army provide tents and three meals a day for the marchers. Roosevelt himself received the marchers. Although he refused to grant their demands, he did offer any marcher who wanted it a CCC job. One thousand out of the 2,400 bonus marchers took Roosevelt up on this offer.

Clearly it would not do to characterize Roosevelt's policy as a simple continuation of Hoover's starve 'em policy, nor to shout that Roosevelt was the precursor of fascism which the Party's agitation sometimes tended to be limited to. A way had to be found to show the masses that the small concessions that Roosevelt granted were not out of the goodness of his heart, but were a byproduct of the mass struggle that had been developing. A way to demonstrate that Roosevelt's increased federal intervention hadn't changed the nature of the capitalist system that was crushing them. A way to help the masses see the need for further development of their struggle.

The CP did realize the necessity for adjusting its tactics. It made considerable improvement in this direction, although in its propaganda their continued to be vacillations between tailing reformist illusions and making sectarian sideline denunciations. Still, any woodiness in the CPUSA's line must be judged in the context that it stood up to the demagogy of Roosevelt and the wave of illusions that swept the masses, and told the masses that class struggle was the way out.

The Party Conference of July 1933

In July of 1933 the Party held a conference to discuss

its tactics and central tasks in light of the new situation. This conference pointed out that there was an upsurge of the strike movement underway. The workers were taking Roosevelt's promise of the right to organize into unions seriously; there was a massive movement of the unorganized to try to get into unions; and this was leading to major battles with the capitalists. The conference and the subsequent Party discussion pointed out that the NRA gave a distinct advantage to the AFL unions. So the Party should hasten to establish itself and TUUL organization in the big factories, at the same time as greatly stepping up its fraction work (the building up of the red opposition) in the AFL unions, as these union were attracting hundreds of thousands of new and militant workers.

It also pointed out that, behind all Roosevelt's demagoguery about sympathy for the unemployed, he was actually doing very little for them. He had dropped his vague talk during the election campaign about unemployment insurance, and the CPUSA must continue to develop the struggles of the unemployed.

Industrial concentration as the central task

The Party stated that the central task was industrial concentration and developing the workers' struggle in defiance of the NRA; at the same time, it declared that unemployed work must not be allowed to slacken. The idea that industrial concentration was the central task of the Party was not new. The CI had been stressing this earlier, and had reinforced the idea again in 1931 after the unemployed movement had gotten going. But in 1933, with rise of the strike movement, there was a real possibility of making a big push in the factories. The CPUSA organized a massive discussion in the Party press and in all Party districts, sections and units on this orientation, and it lasted 6 months. As a result this work was taken up seriously.

A lesser level of work among the unemployed

But as it turned out the CPUSA was unable to develop work both among the employed in the big factories and among the unemployed full speed at the same time. It was not planned this way, but the unemployed work fell off sharply in most areas of the country. The Party did maintain a presence among the unemployed and drew a section into strikes. When major city-wide or state-wide cuts in relief came up, it was still able to reactive the network of the unemployed councils. But generally, across the country, the unemployed committees and councils went into a period of dormancy. The party simply was unable to concentrate on both fronts at once.

It was quite correct to concentrate on the factory work and the strike movement, even at the expense of the work among the unemployed, as this was a period during which intense battles raged over which political trend would have

the dominant influence among workers in the basic mass production industries.

Unemployment Rises and the CWA Is Promised

An example of the work that did continue with respect to the unemployed took place around the CWA program. In the fall of '33 unemployment began to rise again. (During the winter of 1933-34 it would reach the level of March '33.) So the NRA had not rescued the country, and illusions in Roosevelt began to break down. Roosevelt was forced to announce his Civil Works Administration (CWA) program which was supposed to put four million workers to work for four months on relief projects at wages double or triple the average relief allotment, which would mean the difference between malnutrition and at least keeping body and soul together.

But Roosevelt only provided CWA jobs for about a quarter of the unemployed. He would also stop the program after about three months, with the workers either laid off or forced to work on FERA projects at half the wages.

Millions of workers showed up at registration halls to apply for CWA work, but only a minority got jobs. The Party put out a call for comrades in the local areas to go to the CWA hiring halls, to get on the CWA program, and to organize its workers, and also to organize those who were turned down to demand jobs and higher relief.

In some areas the CPUSA did get people on the CWA programs, and they did get valuable experience organizing on work relief projects. This stood the Party in good stead later when the WPA program became the main form of federal relief for the unemployed. In some areas the Party did lead strikes over the wage cuts that occurred as the CWA program was phased out. But most of the local areas were unable to take advantage of the tense situation surrounding the opening and closing of the CWA program as they were preoccupied with the work of industrial concentration and strikes.

And, although the emphasis on the work in the factories and in strikes led to the falling apart of systematic unemployed work in many of the big cities, the work continued to forge ahead in the Prairie states, Washington state, and the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area, and parts of Ohio.

Seattle

In 1931 the Musteites had organized Unemployed Leagues in Seattle and Washington State. They dominated the unemployed movement there and oriented it to self-help projects and electoral politics. The Musteites organized the unemployed to support various bourgeois politicians in the state and local elections in 1932. Once elected, these politicians promptly turned around and cut the relief budget for the unemployed.

But during 1933 the CPUSA stepped in and exposed the

Musteite leaders of the movement. The party led the unemployed in a hunger march and a three-day occupation of Seattle's city hall. They worked inside the Musteite-organized Unemployed Leagues and won the workers to a class struggle policy. They organized a struggle which temporarily halted evictions in Seattle. They organized strikes of the FERA relief workers. And they organized a united front conference to push for unemployment insurance.

By 1934 all the unemployed leagues in the state of Washington had affiliated to the CP-led Unemployed Councils.

During the West Coast Marine strike the Unemployed Leagues in Seattle played a major role in the picket line battles and in driving scabs off the docks. The unemployed helped the strikers obtain relief during the strike. The unemployed under the Party leadership were a major force in pushing the strike to the left, in combating the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and International Seamen's Union (ISU) hacks, and initiating the call for the general strike.

Elsewhere

Thus, although the party was unable to devote the necessary forces to the struggle of the unemployed, the potential continued to exist for pushing these struggles forward. Its development, even in a less organized and systematic manner than before, contributed to breaking down illusions in Roosevelt. And frequently the unemployed played a major role in pushing forward the strikes of the employed workers, as in the West Coast Maritime strike, Toledo Autolite strike, the Stratton Strike in Milwaukee, and the Mckeesport, Pennsylvania strike where thousands of unemployed workers were mobilized to join the strikers on the picket line in a struggle for the demands of both.

The Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill

It was also during the first years of the Roosevelt regime that the CP launched its major national agitational campaign on the question of the unemployed. This was the campaign for the worker's unemployment and social insurance bill.

Actually this was not a new demand for the CP. From the earliest days of the Depression, the CP had raised the demand for a federal system of unemployment insurance at the expense of the capitalists, and administered by elected bodies of workers. It had obtained a million signatures on a petition to introduce the demand as legislation in Congress. It had made the demand a central part of its hunger marches in '31 and '32, and it was the main demand of its '32 presidential election campaign.

This work, and the struggle of the unemployed led by the Party, had so popularized the view that the capitalists

must provide for the unemployed that even the bourgeois politicians had to begin promising some sort of unemployment insurance. In the '32 elections Roosevelt promised some sort of unemployment insurance. The Chamber of Commerce had to advocate a system of unemployment reserves. During 1933-34, 125 unemployment insurance bills and schemes were introduced into state legislatures across the country. Even the AFL had to reverse its position of opposition to unemployment insurance.

But of course the unemployment insurance schemes advocated by AFL and the liberal democrats were but token schemes. They were to be set up on a state-by-state basis, rather than federal, thus dividing the workers struggle. They offered minimal benefits, usually ten weeks or so, and no benefits at all to those who were already unemployed. Thus the question was becoming not whether there would be unemployment insurance, but what kind of unemployment insurance, what kind of relief, would be provided the masses.

In early 1933, the CI had urged the CPUSA to launch a new campaign for social and unemployment insurance. It pointed out that the Workers' Bill would expose the sham social insurance promises and puny relief measures of Roosevelt and the liberal Democrats and pave the way for struggle.

The Worker's Bill was simple, less than a page long. It called for all those who were unemployed, disabled, or too old to work to be paid a benefit equal to their average wages while employed, or a minimum of ten dollars per week plus three dollars per week per dependent. The system was to be financed by a tax on all incomes greater than \$5,000 (which was big money in those days), and administered by elected workers councils.

Following the July '33 Party conference, the CPUSA initiated this campaign with a vengeance. For the next year and a half the Daily Worker carried daily articles on the progress of the campaign. Each day it reported on new resolutions passed by unions, unemployed organizations, etc. in support of the Workers Bill. It also exposed the fraudulent nature of the bourgeois and social-democratic alternatives to the Workers bill.

Because of the prestige built up over years of militant defense of the unemployed, Party or unemployed council representatives were able to go and address thousands and thousands of AFL locals. The Party explained the bill at these meetings and led fights for resolutions endorsing the Worker's Bill despite AFL President Green's prohibition. (The AFL hacks were backing the Democrats' bill.) By January of 1935 the Party had secured endorsements for the bill from 3,000 AFL, TUUL and independent union locals, five AFL state federations, and 30 city councils, and hundreds of fraternal organizations. Despite the objections of their leaders, the unemployed organizations led by the Musteites and the Socialist Party also endorsed the Worker's Bill.

Throughout 1934 the party organized demonstrations in support of the Workers' Bill. In several states it got the

Workers' bill on the ballot as referendum questions. And in 1934 the party made the Workers' Bill the central issue in its election campaign.

The Party was thus able to make the question of unemployment insurance a major national issue. It used this issue as part of its fight for class independence among the workers, and to develop contacts and opposition groups in the reformist unions and unemployed groups. Although the Workers' Bill was never passed, it was introduced in Congress, and the debate on it attracted national attention.

By the summer of '34 Roosevelt was talking about unemployment insurance again and promising a big work relief program at close to average wages. Roosevelt promised to introduce his unemployment insurance bill to Congress in January '35. Thus the battle would be fought over what kind of unemployment and social insurance or what kind of relief program the workers would get. Roosevelt's bill provided just about nothing to the unemployed during the Depression. It postponed any benefits at all for two years while insurance reserves were built up. And then most states required that, to obtain benefits, you had to have worked 40 weeks in the previous year, which just about nobody had. But this was the bill Congress passed in the summer of '35. After this, although the Party continued to demand the Workers' Bill, it ended its campaign on the subject.

Weaknesses in the Campaign for the Workers' Bill

There were of course weaknesses in the Party's campaign for unemployment insurance. At the time the Worker's Bill was launched a good part of the party membership was of the opinion that unemployment insurance was a demand that was realizable only after the socialist revolution or just before. They considered that the party's demand for unemployment insurance was only an agitational slogan, and that no serious struggle could be launched for it.

To counteract these views the party leadership understated the degree of struggle and mass ferment that would be necessary to win the Workers' Bill, and it overstated the economic security that social insurance would bring. True, it is possible to win some kind of social insurance under capitalism, as history shows. The idea that American capitalism was so different from European capitalism that no kind of social insurance would ever be granted was indeed very mistaken. But the Workers' Bill was not just some kind of social insurance. The Workers' Bill was the kind of social insurance of most advantage to the working class. To win such a reform would require a very high level of class struggle, if not a revolution.

As well, the Party overestimated the significance of endorsements by reformist-led unions and mass organizations, and underestimated the difficulty in turning such endorsements into mass actions:

These kinds of errors could just have been a certain

one-sidedness that would be corrected with time and experience. Or such assessments can lead to parliamentarism and a glossing over of the fight against opportunism. They can lead to eventual accommodation to the labor hacks and reformist leaders in the hopes of big numbers and quick victories. Unfortunately, it was right during this later phase of the campaign for the Workers' Bill that the CI was encouraging moves in the reformist direction.

The National Congress on Unemployment Insurance of January 1935

As it became apparent that Congress would consider the question of unemployment insurance in 1935, the CP organized a National Congress on Unemployment and Social Insurance. To this meeting of January 1935 were invited elected delegates of all the mass organizations that had endorsed the Workers' Bill. They were supposed to map a plan of action for the next few months for rallies, demonstrations and strikes during the time that Congress debated whether to pass the Workers Bill or Roosevelt's unemployment non-insurance bill.

But at this Congress Browder, the prominent CP leader whose name later became synonymous with blatant revisionism, gave a speech where he did not talk about the task of organizing mass struggle. Instead he gave a call for the formation of a Labor Party.

The Question of the Labor Party

Perhaps the question of forming a Labor Party might not have been totally off the wall at the time. In general it may have been something you might want to consider. There was a strong movement to the left among the masses in 1934. This radicalization down below was showing up in cracks developing in the bourgeois two-party political system. There was Upton Sinclair's utopian socialist campaign for governor of California, Huey Long's Share the Wealth campaign, the Townsend movement, and so on. It appeared likely that some kind of mass third party or third parties might develop. In this situation one might consider using a call for a labor party to expose the labor hacks' obsequious tailism of the bourgeois parties and promote the idea of class independence.

Actually, at this point it is doubtful that labor party agitation could have played such a role, but more detailed research would be required to give a definitive answer to the question. The point however is not so much the call for the labor party, but the parliamentary cretinist twist given to that call, and the whitewashing of the role of the reformist labor leaders. And Browder rhapsodized over an immediate change in the nature of Congress with the advent of some congressmen to be elected from this Labor Party.

This speech was based on some ideas that Browder had been toying with since November '34. His call for a labor party was approved at the plenum of the Executive Com-

mittee of the CI in December '34. And then he set it forward at the unemployment insurance congress of January '35. It sent out a signal that the CP was making a turn to the right, and that it was looking to make unprincipled alliances with the left-posturing sections of the labor bureaucracy and the Socialist Party.

Over the next few years, to achieve such alliances, the party progressively trimmed its sails and liquidated the political content of its work on one front after another. At the Third National Conference of the MLP, USA a comrade reported on the disastrous effects of this policy on the CPUSA's work in the trade unions, specifically, in the auto industry. [See "The CPUSA's work in auto and the change in line of the mid-1930's" in the March 20, 1987 issue, vol. 3, #3, of the Supplement.] But the liquidation of the work on the unemployed front was even more criminal, if possible.

After 1935 the unemployed movement ebbed considerably, but there continued to be periodic and militant battles against cuts in relief, and there were also strikes by WPA workers over wages and against cut offs from the rolls. Part of the decline in the movement can be attributed to the fact that unemployment did decrease substantially, and there were more benefits for the unemployed. In 1936 there were 10 million unemployed with 2 1/2 million on WPA projects and 2-3 million on direct relief, whereas in 1933 there were 17 million unemployed, no WPA, and 5 million on very meager direct relief. But the other factor in the decline of the movement was the rightward, liquidationist turn in the policy from the CPUSA, which developed more and more after this time and was in accord with the policy of the Seventh Congress of the CI of 1935.

The Struggle of Trends in the Unemployed Movement

The liquidation of the work among the unemployed proceeded despite the fact that, if there was anywhere the party was fighting from a position of strength, it was in the work among the unemployed. Even when forces were shifted to industrial concentration and trade union work, and thus work with the unemployed councils fell off, these councils were still the biggest and most respected unemployed organizations in New York and the major industrial cities in the Midwest.

Up until 1932 the Party had a virtual monopoly on the unemployed movement. At that time A.J. Muste's Conference For Progressive Labor Action (CPLA) began organizing the unemployed in Seattle and Washington state, and a few months later they began activities in Southern California, southern Ohio, and Illinois. The CPLA's National Unemployed Leagues presented themselves as almost as radical as the Unemployed Councils, but more respectable and more "American". A few months later The SP began organizing unemployed workers committees in New York and Chicago. The SP and the Musteites both benefited from ties with the bourgeois political machines

in winning favors for the workers.

The CP had difficulty with the question of different trends emerging. Initially the CP blamed the emergence of competing unemployed organizations on the lack of effort on the part of its comrades in organizing the unemployed, as was its typical voluntarist analysis. But basically it adopted correct tactics. It called for the unity in action of the unemployed on concrete issues, and called for one unemployed organization based on militant tactics of class struggle and on freedom of agitation for different trends. At the same time it also had party comrades join the SP and Musteite unemployed organizations and push for a class struggle policy and unity with the Unemployed Councils. The radicalization of the unemployed was such that these tactics were very successful.

The Party was thus able to win leadership of many locals of the National Unemployed Leagues. In 1933 the unemployed leagues in Seattle and Washington state, the birth place of the Musteite unemployed organizations, affiliated with the Unemployed Councils.

That same year the SP called a conference of unemployed organizations in an attempt to form a national unemployed center opposed to the CP-led unemployed councils. It tried to block the admission of representatives of the unemployed councils to the conference, but the rank-and-file of its own unemployed organizations voted to admit the communists. The SP wound up being so isolated that it was forced to walk out of its own conference.

During 1934 both the SP and Musteite unemployed organizations voted to back the CP's Workers' Bill although the SP was basically backing the Roosevelt program. The pressure was so great that, in order to maintain credibility among the workers, the SP and Musteite unemployed leaders were forced to call nation-wide demonstrations in support of the Workers' Bill. Thus the CP's position among the unemployed was strong. Although there was a certain drifting of workers between trends, the basic motion was in the CP's direction.

But the CP felt strongly the pressure of the left-wing of the reformists in the workers' movement as a whole. The strike movement of '34 had demonstrated that while the workers were moving left and the party had a lot of influence, they were not ready to come over to the party. The "left" socialists, the Musteites, and the "independent" union leaders (4) were playing a centrist role in blocking the workers from moving directly to the Party and its revolutionary unions.

In general the CP had a lot of difficulty understanding and dealing with this phenomenon. With the change in line of the CI, the CPUSA just gave up the protracted work necessary to expose the left-posturing trends and win the workers to the communist line and policy. Instead it began to see the left posturers, and later even the right-wing of the movement, as progressive forces to merge with.

Unity Agreements Among the Organizations of the Unemployed

In April '35 the SP united its unemployed groups into the Workers' Alliance. Despite the opposition of the SP right-wing, the convention of the Workers Alliance voted to begin unity negotiations with the CP's Unemployment Councils.

A year later a unity agreement was reached at the top. The CP agreed to merge the National Unemployed Council into the Worker's Alliance and give the SP a two-thirds majority on the National Executive. This was a major concession, but it's not like they surrendered everything to the SP. Due to the disintegration of the SP, and the CP's more energetic work at the base, the CP was soon backed by local and state organizations representing 75 per cent of the membership, and in a year was the dominant force in the national leadership in alliance with the left reformists.

The liquidation of all struggle

But the CP itself had turned to the right. The Workers Alliance' became more or less the trade union of the WPA workers. The work among the unemployed who did not get in the WPA fell apart altogether. The politics of the Workers Alliance became more and more rightist. Mass demonstrations or strikes subsided or were carried out totally in the confines of what was acceptable to the labor hacks and the Rooseveltian coalition. Things got so bad that when the economy collapsed again in 1938 and unemployment went as high as it was in 1932, Herbert Benjamin, the CP's main leader in the Workers Alliance, stated:

"Times have changed. The fight of the last eight years has not been in vain. The attitude and policy of the government have changed...Responsible leaders of the unemployed are not likely to advise any action which would jeopardize the necessary collaboration with the powerful unions and progressive movements generally."

And just in case anyone failed to understand, he said there could be no demonstrations "against officials supported by organized labor and progressive forces."

Thus, even though the CP enjoyed a very strong position among the unemployed, it had progressively trimmed its sails to the point of liquidating the struggle for the sake of its overall ties with the labor bureaucrats and Democratic Party politicians. The Workers Alliance became an ordinary pressure group. Such were the bitter liquidationist fruits of the 7th Congress Line.

Despite the liquidation of the unemployed work by the rightward turn at the 7th Congress, there is much that can

be learned from the heroic and inspiring work of the party in the early and mid-30's. And much to be learned from the tragedy wrought by the liquidationist course. ■

Notes:

(1) The TUUL is the Trade Union Unity League. It was founded on August 31-Sept. 1, 1929 as a reorganization of the Trade Union Education League (TUEL) at its fourth national convention. The CPUSA's trade union work was concentrated through these organizations which were organizations of militant workers who accepted a red program for the trade unions but were not necessarily communists. The TUEL for example called for a class struggle economic policy, for amalgamation of the craft unions into industrial unions, organizing the unorganized, affiliation to the Red International of Labor Unions, recognition of the USSR, and the abolition of capitalism.

The TUEL and the TUUL were similar in many ways. The main significance of the changeover from TUEL to TUUL concerned work within the AFL. TUEL concentrated on work within the AFL and other capitalist-led unions. But the TUUL, while continuing work within the AFL, concentrated on organizing the unorganized into new industrial unions with a class struggle policy. The TUEL was mainly an organization of the left-wing opposition in the unions, while the TUUL sought to set up militant industrial unions.

(2) For example, John Williamson gives the 10% figure in his article "Some Burning Problems of Organization" in the June 1930 issue of *The Communist*. However, he doesn't say whether this figure was affected by the onslaught of the economic crisis.

(3) The Muste-ites were a group of left social-democrats. The social-democratic Socialist Party trailed behind the AFL bureaucrats. In 1929 the Conference for Progressive Labor Action was formed as a centrist force between the reformists and the CP, with A.J. Muste one of its chief figures. The CPLA had a more radical program than the SP and called for a number of the things that the CP did, including recognition of the Soviet Union. But it was flabby with respect to the bourgeoisie, in practice lined up towards the reformists, posed as more "American" than the communists, and worked to block the motion of the masses towards the CP.

(4) The "independent" unions referred to were those that were neither AFL nor red. ■